

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

NOAH

OCTOBER 5, 2013

1 HESHVAN 5774

Rosh Hodesh Heshvan will be celebrated on Friday and Shabbat, October 4 & 5.

DEDICATIONS: Happy Birthday to Dr. Elchanan Greenwald of Yerushalayim – Rosh Hodesh Heshvan and a Refuah Shelemah to Dr David Bellehsen from a friend in Brooklyn and all of us!
Mabrouk and Mazal Tov to our dear friend from Turnberry Rabbi Hanania Abisoror and the entire family on the engagement of their daughter to Albert Chocron of Venezuela.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO JONAH

Candles: 6:14 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 6:15 Sharp

SPECIAL START TIME THIS SHABBAT 8:30 AM

**We want to wish a MAAL TOV to the Grill family celebrating a Bar Mitzvah at the Bach
Many of our regulars who start Tefilah with us will either be away or at the Bar Mitzvah**

We have asked some to pray with us and then go to the Bar Mitzvah

To accommodate them and to insure a Minyan we will begin at 8:30 AM sharp.

We need at least ten guys to commit to be there in time.

**We will complete Tefilah B'H before 11AM allowing those who wish to go the the bar mitzvah a chance to go.
We apologize if this inconveniences anyone. Please pass the word to those who might not read these notes in
advance of Shabbat.**

The Kiddush this week Donated by anonymous

New Shabbat Morning Children's Program with Morah Avital. For children ages 0 to 5. 10:30 to 11:30 in the playroom.

11:00 - 12:00 Shabbat Morning Kids Program with Nina upstairs in the Rabbi's study. Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . And Leah Colish will be babysitting down in the playroom

4:30 - Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Treats, Stories, Basketball, Hula-hoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.

**Pirkei Avot with Rav Aharon: 5:00 Minha: 5:40 PM –
Seudah Shelishi and a Class 6:15 – with David
Evening Service (Arbith): 7:05 PM - Shabbat Ends: 7:13 PM**

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM

**3rd Long Beach Discovery Seminar sponsored by the Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach and the Bach Jewish Center
SUNDAY, October 13th, from 12:45 PM to 5:30 PM at the newly renovated Long Beach Hotel, 405 East Broadway, in Long
Beach.**

What is a Discovery Seminar?

**More than 200,000 people have enjoyed a Discovery Seminar over the last 20
years all over the world. What is a Discovery Seminar?**

**Based on analytical techniques used by the Mossad, the Israeli CIA,
fascinating interactive discussions ensue challenging audiences to judge
whether the Bible was written by men, or by a power "beyond time and space".
Educational, entertaining and intellectually stimulating. We look forward to
seeing you there!**

There is no charge for admission but space is limited. Pre-registration is suggested, so call Jessica at 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

PHOTO: Our Sukkah set up on the deck overlooking the beach. The walls are acrylic panels in an aluminum frame; the 12' dining table was made by Artistic Frame and wrapped in marine quality synthetic white leather. The chairs are transparent polycarbonate. Icicle lights frame the perimeter while multiple spheres illuminate the center of the table. I think that the Sukkah won the award for best Sukkah from @TheJewishHostess on Instagram. Search key word #abettersukkot on Instagram for some other beautiful Sukkahs. Design and Decoration by Chantelle Bibi. Thanks Chantelle!

Editors Notes

My daughter Aryana forwarded a note telling of The Shabbos Project and after looking into it, I was blown away. The chief rabbi of South Africa, Warren Goldstein, has launched a project to get every Jew in South Africa to keep Shabbat next weekend for Parshat Lech Lecha – October 11-12. Check out the three minute video at www.theshabbosproject.org , or

google The Shabbos Project and read Rabbi Goldstein's speech.

My daughter writes that apparently, it's really caught on and is reaching a lot of people. An amazing story is that the videographer for the project (not Jewish) became so inspired that he wanted to keep Shabbat. He told the chief rabbi of his plan, and the chief rabbi apparently explained that a non-Jew does not need to keep Shabbat. The videographer went and started checking and asking questions of his family, and he came back with ketubot and various documents. Turns out he's Jewish!

What a wonderful and inspiring idea. Kol HaKavod to the Rabbi for his efforts. Pity we don't have a chief Rabbi of America to unite and inspire us. www.theshabbosproject.org

PS ... I was asked to resend last weeks article as a many did not get it. I reworked it for this week

What the Wizard of Oz taught me about taking the holidays into 5774.

I returned from the Synagogue on Sunday morning, stepped into the Sukkah and began taking down the lights and the sechach. The sun was shining off the Ocean and the beach was deserted. I paused for a moment and took in what a beautiful day it was. I sat

down pondering the splendor of the sukkah and reflected on the special moments we got to spend as a family over the past few weeks. And then I thought, "why not leave the Sukkah up for another few weeks".

The blessings of the New Year extending through Sukkot and Simcha Torah are meant to energize us through the entire year. As the holiday season ends, as we leave the sukkah and complete the last hakafah or dance with the Torah, as we celebrate Rosh Hodesh Cheshvan this Shabbat, what can we take with us into 5774?

On the morning of sukkot as I stood at the bimah with the Torah opened in front of me, I turned to Rabbi Colish and told him that I would probably pause at the seventh verse where the Torah describes the bringing of the Omer. The word there is vahavetem, but I would probably say vehevetem as is the more usual pronunciation. Rabbi Colish who has become our regular Baal Koreh - Torah reader - told me, "just think va ha ha ha ha ha".

That worked. I responded that the laugh reminded me of a munchkin in the Wizard of Oz. In fact the entire holiday reminded me of the Wizard of Oz.

The holiday of sukkot is the holiday of joy. We refer to it as zeman simchateynu - the time of our happiness. We leave our homes, our cars, our offices and our fast paced lives and step into the sukkah with its flimsy walls and partially covered roof and there we find true joy. In the sukkah with family and friends, with good food and conversation, with lessons and songs, we celebrate.

Rabbi Abittan would tell us a story to stress the point.

In the city of Krakow there was a magnificent synagogue until the second world war called Reb Isaac Yeikel's shul, after the man who built it. Isaac was a very poor man who lived in Krakow so one would naturally wonder how such a poor man could build a beautiful synagogue.

One night Isaac had a dream in which he was shown that there was a very large treasure buried near a big bridge in the city of Vienna opposite the royal palace. He was shown all the surroundings so that he could recognize it. When it was morning, he decided to ignore the dream, since after-all most dreams are just foolishness. But he had it again the next night, and continued to have it. He finally could not hold himself back, and he set out to Vienna to see if there was any truth in the dream.

Today the 289 mile trip from Krakow to Vienna takes about five hours by car. Then for a poor man on foot with a need to beg for funds on the way it might take a month or more. But after a difficult journey Isaac finally arrived in the Austrian Capitol.

He saw the bridge exactly as it had been in his dream, and he could even recognize where the treasure was buried. But there was a problem. The bridge being near the palace was surrounded by guards; royal guards, who didn't look like they would be so accommodating to a poor Polish Jew digging beneath the bridge. So everyday Isaac went out to scout the bridge, hoping some idea would come to him as to how he could get the treasure that was there.

After a few days, his loitering became obvious. The guards began to suspect him. After all what purpose is there for a Jew to come and look around the palace everyday? So the head of the guards came over to him and asked, 'Jew, what do you want here?'

With little choice, Isaac told him his dream and the reason why he journeyed so far from Poland. After hearing the story the guard broke out in bellowing laughter. 'You stupid Jews', said the guard. 'If I was as foolish as you, following my dreams after buried treasure, you know what I would have done? I would have gone to Krakow and dug under the oven of some Jew named Isaac the son of Yeikel. Why half the Jews are called Isaac and the other half Yeikel. How stupid you Jews are.'

On hearing the words of the guard he replied, 'Yes, I suppose you are correct. Please accept my apologies for disturbing you. Thank you for setting me straight. I shall now return home.' So he journeyed another month until he finally returned home, and dug under his oven and found a huge treasure. With part of it in appreciation to G-d, he built that Synagogue.

The advertising industry is built on leading us to believe that the next thing that we buy will bring us true happiness. Once I have that car, I will be happy. Once I have that house, I will be happy. Once I have that phone, I will be happy. Our kids grow up with commercials promising that this next toy will be everything and they relay those messages to us. And we buy the car, the phone or the toy and a short time later the novelty wears off and we see something new and again believe that with this new thing I will be happy.

How many of us bought the four hundred million dollar lotto ticket and heard the little voice tell us that

if I win, I'll truly be happy. Look it might be nice to win, but a Lotto winners happiness is usually fleeting.

Someday I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon drops,
High above the chimney tops,
That's where you'll find me.

We dream that somewhere over the rain bow is that pot of gold. Somewhere over the rainbow is that house, that spouse, that car, that toy that will bring me happiness.

But the sukkah comes to remind us that all those are illusions. We leave the trappings and for a week we go camping with G-d, we go home to the simple pleasures in life. We step out of the rat race and into the sukkah accompanied by our ancestors. We dance with the Torah and recall the lessons they taught us. We return to the Source and find the true treasure.

And when it all ends, we click our shoes three times saying, there's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home.

As the holiday ends, and as we step out into a world with a media attacking us with their rendition of joy, let's remember. Let's not dismantle the spiritual sukkah so quickly. Let's bring the sukkah with us. Let's keep the dance with the Torah in mind. Let's hear the echo of the shofar. And let us not forget that, there's no place like home.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

**A Simchat Torah Story From 1663 London
Samuel Pepys' account of stumbling upon a
lively synagogue service
By Menachem Butler**

Simchat Torah is the time when Jewish children of all ages and from all denominations rejoice in celebration of a personal connection to the Torah and to their community. The festivities are often so exciting they're recounted for months—and sometimes even years—afterwards. But for Spanish & Portuguese Jews living in England and elsewhere around the world, the story of one particular Simchat Torah celebration will be told again this year, exactly 350 years after it happened.

On Thursday night at London's Spanish & Portuguese congregation, Bevis Marks Synagogue,

the story recounted will be of renowned British diarist Samuel Pepys unexpectedly entering Congregation Shaar Hashamayim in London on Simchat Torah in 1663. Pepys' account of his experience has become one of the most famous foundational stories in the narrative of Anglo-Jewry.

The modern Jewish community in England began in 1656, several hundred years after its expulsion in 1290 (though individual Jews had stayed and others visited during the intermediary centuries). During the 17th-century, famed Portuguese kabbalist and rabbi Menasseh ben Israel tirelessly petitioned the British Parliament to allow for the re-establishment of an organized Jewish community in England, and Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the British Commonwealth, granted permission for the Jews to reenter. Almost immediately, a Portuguese-Jewish merchant named António Fernandez Carvajal, the first Jew to be re-admitted to England, established a synagogue that would worship in the Spanish & Portuguese traditions.

Within several months, on December 19th, 1656, Congregation Shaar Hashamayim opened in Creechurch Lane in the City of London. (A related Spanish & Portuguese congregation in New York City, Shearith Israel, was established two years earlier in 1654 and remains the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States.)

Just a few years later, Pepys found himself at Shaar Hashamayim during Simchat Torah, completely aghast at the joyous scene before his eyes. In his diary entry for Wednesday, October 14th, 1663, he recorded the event, forever capturing for posterity the mood from that Simchat Torah evening 350 years ago:

Up and to my office, where all the morning, and part of it Sir J. Minnes spent, as he do every thing else, like a fool, reading the Anatomy of the body to me, but so sillily as to the making of me understand any thing that I was weary of him, and so I toward the 'Change and met with Mr. Grant, and he and I to the Coffee-house, where I understand by him that Sir W. Petty and his vessel are coming, and the King intends to go to Portsmouth to meet it. Thence home and after dinner my wife and I, by Mr. Rawlinson's conduct, to the Jewish Synagogue: where the men and boys in their vayles, and the women behind a lattice out of sight; and some things stand up, which I believe is their Law, in a press to which all coming in do bow; and at the putting on their vayles do say something, to which others that hear him do cry Amen, and the party do kiss his vayle. Their service all in a singing way, and in Hebrew. And anon their

Laws that they take out of the press are carried by several men, four or five several burthens in all, and they do relieve one another; and whether it is that every one desires to have the carrying of it, I cannot tell, thus they carried it round about the room while such a service is singing. And in the end they had a prayer for the King, which they pronounced his name in Portugall; but the prayer, like the rest, in Hebrew. But, Lord! to see the disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than people knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more and indeed I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this. Away thence with my mind strongly disturbed with them, by coach and set down my wife in Westminster Hall, and I to White Hall, and there the Tangier Committee met, but the Duke and the Africa Committee meeting in our room, Sir G. Carteret; Sir W. Compton, Mr. Coventry, Sir W. Rider, Cuttance and myself met in another room, with chairs set in form but no table, and there we had very fine discourses of the business of the fitness to keep Sally, and also of the terms of our King's paying the Portugees that deserted their house at Tangier, which did much please me, and so to fetch my wife, and so to the New Exchange about her things, and called at Thomas Pepys the turner's and bought something there, and so home to supper and to bed, after I had been a good while with Sir W. Pen, railing and speaking freely our minds against Sir W. Batten and Sir J. Minnes, but no more than the folly of one and the knavery of the other do deserve.

Pepys' depiction seems pretty similar to what one might see today on Simchat Torah, and offers a rare portrayal of early modern synagogue practice on one of the most festive days of the Jewish calendar. The story continues to be told to Jews and non-Jews alike when they enter a Spanish & Portuguese congregation in America and Europe on Simchat Torah night, with the hopes that they too will experience a similar feeling of festive, jovial, communal frivolity in celebration of the Torah.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Noach, a righteous man, is introduced in contrast to a generation that "has perverted its ways". Hashem instructs him to build, and outfit the Ark.

2nd Aliya: Noach is told to enter the Ark along with all the animals. On Cheshvan 17, 1656 - October 27, 2106 b.c.e the flood began.

3rd Aliya: For 40 days and nights the waters increased, destroying all living things. The water

raged upon the surface of the earth for 150 days, and then diminished for the next 150. On Nissan 17, May 23, the Ark rested upon Mt. Ararat. Noach sends out the Raven and then the Dove, and on Cheshvan 27, October 27, exactly 1 solar year after it began, the earth was dry.

4th Aliya: Noach and his family exit the Tayvah, and offer sacrifices to Hashem. They are commanded to keep the 7 Noahide mitzvos.

5th Aliya: Hashem promises to never again destroy the world and designates the rainbow as the symbol of that covenant.

6th Aliya: The story of Noach, the vineyard, and the subsequent blessings and curses is related. The descendants of Cham, Yefes, and Canaan are listed.

7th Aliya: The story of the Tower of Babel in 1996 and Nimrod's world dominance is told. The 10 generations of Shem, culminating in the introduction of Avram and Sarai, are listed. The year is 2023. Note that Avram was 48 years old when the Tower of Babel took place and he was 56 years old when Noach died.

This week's Haftorah is from Yishayah Chap. 66 and reflects the fact that today is also Rosh Chodesh. Yishayah describes the ultimate downfall of all our enemies during the war of Gog and Magog. The Navi explains that this world is the manifestation of G-d's presence and glory. Yet, we are incapable and sometimes unwilling to properly recognize G-d's manifest presence. Even when the Bais Hamikdash stood the Bnai Yisroel did not appreciate their opportunity to be close to G-d and serve Him. The Navi forewarns that insincere expressions of devotion are tantamount to offering blemished sacrifices and G-d will punish those who lack sincerity and devotion.

Nevertheless, the institution of the Bais Hamikdash and prayer are our only means for communication love and devotion. Therefore, those who truly mourn for the absence of the Bais Hamikdash and the Temple services will also merit to rejoice in her redemption and reconstruction. When the Bais Hamikdash will be rebuilt the nation will again be able to witness the Rosh Chodesh offering and service, and fully participate in expressing their commitment

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

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

When Noah emerged from the ark, he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk. It seems that while Noah did nothing wrong by planting a vineyard, the Sages teach that he was remiss in making that his first priority upon leaving the haven in which he had been spared from the destruction. He was supposed to replant the world, and he should have started with necessities, not wine. The word *kuj* comes from the word *ih`kuj*, which means mundane and not special.

Rabbi Frand quotes Rabbi Leibel Hyman who explains that what made Noah mundane was that he chose to look at his past accomplishments, his heroic salvation of all animal life in the ark, and say, "I did enough. Now it's time to retire, to relax with a glass of wine."

This lesson applies to each and every Jew, to this very day.

Some commentators write that the most difficult test for Abraham was the need to obtain a burial plot for Sarah after all he had been through with the test of the sacrifice of Isaac. But how could that compare to the test of the sacrifice? There he was commanded to sacrifice his only son!

The answer is that one of the most difficult tasks is to keep moving, to keep building, no matter what our prior accomplishments may have been. Abraham could justifiably have said, "I did more than enough." But he didn't. He kept on moving and doing, and every Jew, as a descendent of Abraham, doesn't rest on his laurels. He keeps going.

One of the greatest myths that American culture has invented is the marvel of early retirement. Every American dreams of the day when he will be able to relax on his porch with a cup of wine (or a bottle of beer perhaps). But this is a fallacy. At the age of 82, Sumner Redstone, CEO of Viacom, said, "You retire, you die."

Even if retirement is the great American dream, it shouldn't be ours. Americans, as sons of Noah, earn their retirement honestly. It is their heritage from their great-grandfather Noah. These are not wicked or evil goals, just plain and mundane.

We trace our roots back to Abraham Abinu, who at the ripe old age of 137 was still overcoming daunting challenges, without looking to put up his feet to relax. While those around us follow the ordinary path of Noah, we follow Abraham and build as long as we can. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And from the animals that are not pure..." (Beresheet 7:2)

Noah was commanded to take from each specie seven pairs of animals which are kosher and one pair of animals which are not kosher, and bring

them into the ark. The Torah calls the kosher animals *ruvy* (tavor) - pure - and the non-kosher ones are called *ruvy tk rat* (asher lo tavor) - those that are not pure. The Rabbis point out that the proper word to use when describing the unacceptable animals is *tny* (tameh) - unclean, and yet the Torah uses the longer phrase *ruvy tk rat* (asher lo tavor) - which is not pure. This is to teach us the importance of not using negative words when talking about someone or something. The Gemara tells us that once three Kohanim were describing what kind of a portion each one received and one of them used a negative word to describe his share. They checked up after him and saw that there was something wrong with his lineage.

The lesson is very simple yet extremely important. The way we speak says so much about ourselves. Not only what we say, but the kind of words we use reflect on our character and on our spirit. We should always try to use words of purity and beauty and stay away from vulgarities and the like. It is especially difficult in today's day and age, when the sharper the word, the more recognition one gets. But it is much more meaningful if we put some thought into the choice of words we use. If the Torah, in which every letter counts, saw fit to add extra words in order to speak in a positive way, shouldn't we do the same? Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR The Rainbow's Message

After the flood, Hashem makes a promise to Noah and all his descendants that He would never again flood the earth. He showed Noah a rainbow in the sky that would serve as an everlasting sign of this covenant made with the world that it would never again be destroyed.

Different approaches have been taken to explain the particular significance of the rainbow and its designation as a sign of Hashem's covenant. One especially meaningful explanation was suggested by the great Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin (Poland, 1887-1933), founder of the Daf Yomi study program. Rav Shapiro noted the famous comments of the Zohar criticizing Noah for not making attempts to inspire his contemporaries toward repentance. The verse in Yeshayahu (54:9) describes the flood as "Meh Noah" – "the waters of Noah" – and the Zohar explains that Noah was "blamed" for the flood because he made no effort to help the people change. Upon hearing G-d's decree of the flood, he should not have just accepted the news and felt content saving himself and his family. He should have immediately gone out and preached to the people, investing every bit of

effort possible to motivate them to repent. Because he failed to do so, the flood is forever known as "Meh Noah," the flood of Noah.

But the question then arises, why, in fact, did Noah fail to make such efforts? Surely there must be some reason why he did not bother to inspire the people of his time to change.

Rav Shapiro suggested that Noah assumed all hope was lost. He saw how debased and corrupt the people had become and concluded that there was no possibility at all of change. The generation had deteriorated to such woefully low levels of sin, he figured, that it would be a waste of his time to try inspiring them to improve.

On this basis, Rav Shapiro explained, we can understand the powerful symbolism of the rainbow. Our Sages teach that during the period of the flood, the sun, moon and stars ceased functioning. The entire earth was plunged into complete darkness throughout the forty days of the flood. But afterward, not only did the sun shine, but G-d produced a magnificent rainbow across the sky, providing even greater and more beautiful illumination. He wanted to show Noah – and us – that light can shine even after the darkest periods. No matter how "dark" things become, there is the possibility of the restoration of light, and even greater light than that which existed beforehand. The rainbow is the sign of G-d's covenant with the earth because it represents the potential for every person and every generation to "shine" brightly even after a period of spiritual "darkness." Noah was wrong for despairing from his generation, and we, too, must never despair from anyone, including ourselves. Even when things appear "dark," they can eventually become "light."

Rav Shapiro cited in this context the Mishna's exhortation in Pirkeh Abot, "Im Lamadeta Torah Harbeh Al Tahazik Toba Le'asmecha Kil Lechah Nosarta." Literally, this means, "If you studied much Torah, do not congratulate yourself, because it was for this you were created." Rav Shapiro, however, explained this Mishna to mean that if a person amassed Torah knowledge, "Al Tahazik Toba Le'asmecha" – he should not keep the "Toba" – the goodness, referring to Torah – for himself, and should instead work to disseminate it, "because it was for this you were created." We are here not just to work on ourselves, but to influence and impact upon the world. Whatever spiritual wealth we have accumulated must be shared, because we are here to make a difference in the world, and not to isolate ourselves as Noah did.

The rainbow, then, is a challenge to each and every one of us to do what we can to "shine" the light of Torah, with the firm belief that no matter how "dark" things appear, we have the potential to make a change and make a meaningful impact upon the world.

Rabbi Wein

After the destruction of civilization in the great flood a new generation arose and searched for a way to immortalize itself – so that their existence would withstand any new natural disasters. They gathered in the Tigris-Euphrates valley and there built the great city that would be called Nineveh. And to guarantee that their achievements would be forever remembered, they embarked on building a colossal structure – a great tower pointing towards - and seemingly even touching - the sky.

It was the first ancestor of our modern-day skyscrapers. This was the great technological leap forward in the discovery of creating bricks as a building material, which enabled such a project to be imagined and executed. The Torah specifically relates to us that the sole purpose of this tower soaring heavenward was "to build for us a name" – a remembrance, an eternal monument to human technology and ability that later generations would gaze upon in awe and admiration.

It was a testament to the human ego and its accompanying hubris. That is perhaps what Midrash is implying when it states that, ".....we will prop up the heavens" with this tower. They were saying that puny man could successfully defy God and nature and immortalize itself with its technological wonders and its insatiable ambitions.

Every dictator in history has sought to immortalize his achievements in stone and marble lest his greatness become unknown to future generations. Almost all of these memorials have failed to live up to their original purpose. The slaves who built the pyramids of Egypt are more well-known than are their pharoanic masters.

The Parthenon and Coliseum lie in ruins and Nineveh itself has long since disappeared from the map of the world. And the great twin towers of the World Trade Center of New York City are also no longer with us.

The irony of all of this is that none of the great architectural monuments of the ancient, medieval and modern world were felled by nature. There was no need to prop up the heavens in order to save Nineveh from destruction. Nineveh and all of the

other great monuments of the ancient world were all destroyed by human beings who were themselves bent upon creating their own eternal monuments to their own achievements.

It is part of the inborn competitive nature of human beings to attempt to destroy the immortality of others as a means of guaranteeing one's own immortality. Thus we continue to hound people who are already in the grave, searching for scandal and blame. The Torah itself tells us that the tower at Nineveh was never completed because people did not understand each other's language – basically, they could no longer cooperate one with the other.

The fractiousness and parochialism of humans towards each other is what truly stands in the way of human immortality. Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant summed up this lesson in his pithy remark: "Concern for the needs of others in this world is my entry ticket to the World to Come." Torah values and its observance coupled with good deeds, not physical monuments, are our guarantors in achieving immortality.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

The praise that Noah is accorded is unparalleled anywhere in Tanakh. He was, says the Torah, "a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God." No such praise is given to Abraham or Moses or any of the prophets. The only person in the Bible who comes close is Job, described as "blameless and upright (tam ve-yashar); he feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1: 1). Noah is in fact the only individual in Tanakh described as righteous (tzaddik).

Yet the man we see at the end of his life is not the person we saw at the beginning. After the flood:

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. (Gen. 9: 20-23)

The man of God has become a man of the soil. The upright man has become a drunkard. The man clothed in virtue now lies naked and unashamed. The man who saved his family from the flood is now so

undignified that two of his sons are ashamed to look at him. This is a tale of decline. Why?

Noah is the classic case of someone who is righteous but not a leader. In a disastrous age, when all has been corrupted, when the world is filled with violence, when even God himself – in the most poignant line in the whole Torah – "regretted that He had made man on earth, and He was pained to His very core," Noah alone justifies God's faith in humanity, the faith that led Him to create mankind in the first place. That is an immense achievement, and nothing should detract from it. Noah is, after all, the man through whom God makes a covenant with all humanity. Noah is to humanity what Abraham is to the Jewish people.

Noah was a good man in a bad age. But his influence on the life of his contemporaries was apparently zero. That is implicit in God's statement, "You alone have I found righteous in this whole generation." It is implicit also in the fact that only Noah and his family, together with the animals, were saved. It is reasonable to assume that these two facts – Noah's righteousness and his lack of influence on his contemporaries – are intimately related. Noah preserved his virtue by separating himself from his environment. That is how, in a world gone mad, he stayed sane.

The famous debate among the sages as to whether the phrase "perfect in his generations" is praise or criticism may well be related to this. Some said that "perfect in his generations" means, only relative to the low standard then prevailing. Had he lived in the generation of Abraham, they said, he would have been insignificant. Others said the opposite: if in a wicked generation Noah was righteous, how much greater he would have been in a generation with role models like Abraham.

The argument, it seems to me, turns on whether Noah's isolation was part of his character – he was a loner – or merely a necessary tactic in that time and place. If he was naturally a loner he would not have gained by the presence of heroes like Abraham. He would have been impervious to influence whether for good or bad. If he was not a loner by nature but merely by circumstance, then in another age he would have sought out kindred spirits and become greater still.

Yet what exactly was Noah supposed to do? How could he have been an influence for good in a society bent on evil? Was he really meant to speak in an age when no one would listen? Sometimes people do not listen even to the voice of God himself. We had an example of this just two chapters earlier, when God

warns Cain of the danger of his violent feelings toward Abel – “Why are you so furious? Why are you depressed? ... sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you, but you can dominate it” (Gen. 4: 6-7). Yet Cain did not listen, and instead went on to murder his brother. If God speaks and men do not listen, how can we criticise Noah for not speaking when all the evidence suggests that they would not have listened either?

The Talmud raises this very question in a different context, in the years leading to the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple, another lawless age:

R. Aha b. R. Hanina said: Never did a favourable word go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, of which He retracted for evil, except the following, where it is written, “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (source). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel, “Go and set a mark of ink on the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them; and a mark of blood upon the foreheads of the wicked, that the destroying angels may have power over them.” Said the Attribute of Justice before the Holy One, blessed be He, “Sovereign of the Universe! How are these different from those?” “Those are completely righteous men, while these are completely wicked,” He replied. “Sovereign of the Universe!” said Justice, “they had the power to protest but did not.” Said God, “It was fully known to them that had they protested they would not have heeded them.” “Sovereign of the Universe!” said Justice, “If it was revealed to You, was it revealed to them?” Hence it is written, “[Slay] the old man, the young and the maiden, and little children and women; but do not come near any man on whom is the mark; and begin at my Sanctuary [mikdash]. Then they began at the elders which were before the house.” R. Joseph said, “Read not mikdashi but mekuddashay [My sanctified ones]: this refers to the people who fulfilled the Torah from alef to tav.” (Shabbat 55a)

According to this passage, even the righteous in Jerusalem were punished at the time of the destruction of the Temple because they did not protest the actions of their contemporaries. God objects to the claim of Justice: Why punish them for their failure to protest when it was clear that had they done so, no one would have listened? Justice replies: This may be clear to angels – translate this to mean, this may be clear in hindsight – but at the time, no

human could have been sure that his words would have had no impact. Justice asks: How can you be sure you will fail if you never try?

According to the Talmud, God reluctantly agreed. Hence the strong principle: when bad things are happening in society, when corruption, violence and injustice prevail, it is our duty to register a protest, even if it seems likely that it will have no effect. Why? Because that is what moral integrity demands. Silence may be taken as consent. And besides, we can never be sure that no one will listen. Morality demands that we ignore probability and focus on possibility. Perhaps someone will take notice and change his or her ways, and that “perhaps” is enough.

This idea did not suddenly appear for the first time in the Talmud. It is stated explicitly in the book of Ezekiel. This is what God says to the prophet:

“Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.” (Ezekiel 2: 3-5)

God tells the prophet to speak, regardless of whether people will listen.

So, one way of reading the story of Noah is as a failure of leadership. Noah was righteous but not a leader. He was a good man who had no influence on his environment. There are, to be sure, other ways of reading the story, but this seems to me the most straightforward. If so, then Noah is the third in a series of failures of responsibility. Adam and Eve failed to take personal responsibility for their actions (“It wasn’t me”). Cain refused to take moral responsibility (“Am I my brother’s keeper?”). Noah failed the test of collective responsibility.

This way of interpreting the story, if correct, entails a strong conclusion. We know that Judaism involves collective responsibility (“All Israel are responsible for one another”). But it may be that being human also involves collective responsibility. Not only are Jews responsible for one another. So are we all, regardless of our faith or lack of it. So, at any rate, Maimonides argued, though Nahmanides disagreed (Maimonides, *Hilkhos Melakhim* 9: 14. Ramban, *Commentary to Genesis* 34: 13, s.v. *Ve-rabbim*).

Hassidim had a simple way of making the point. They called Noah a tzaddik im peltz, "a righteous man in a fur coat." There are two ways of keeping warm on a cold night. You can wear a fur coat or light a fire. Wear a fur coat and you warm only yourself. Light a fire and you warm others. We are supposed to light a fire.

Noah was a good man who was not a leader. Was he, after the Flood, haunted by guilt? Did he think of the lives he might have saved if only he had spoken out, whether to his contemporaries or to God? We cannot be sure. The text is suggestive but not conclusive.

It seems, though, that the Torah sets a high standard for the moral life. It is not enough to be righteous if that means turning our backs on a society that is guilty of wrongdoing. We must take a stand. We must protest. We must register dissent even if the probability of changing minds is small. That is because the moral life is a life we share with others. We are, in some sense, responsible for the society of which we are a part. It is not enough to be good. We must encourage others to be good. There are times when each of us must lead.

PARSHA PARABLES **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Did you ever stop to imagine what life was like inside of Noah's ark? There were three floors; the middle floor was filled with a collection of the world's animals wild, domestic, and otherwise. Birds and critters of all shapes and sizes, vermin and an endless potpourri of creepy crawlers whose pesky descendants bear witness to their survival during that tempestuous period.

Then there was a floor of refuse. There was no recycling center, and no sewage system that I am aware of.

The humans had the top floor. Cramped in an inescapable living space was Noah, his three sons, their wives and one mother-in-law. I think the rest of the scenario can play clearly in our minds. Surely, it was far from easy. What intrigues are the detailed architectural commands that Hashem gave Noah. Hashem details measurements and design for an ark that took 120 years to build! Why? Are there lessons to be learned from the design of the design of the ark? After all, Hashem promised that there will be no

more floods. If there are no more floods, then there need not be any more arks. So what difference does it make how it was built. Obviously, there are inherent lessons we can learn from the design of the ark. Let's look at one.

Noah is told to build a window. It seems practical enough; after all sitting for an entire year can get awfully stuffy. So Noah is commanded to build a window for breathing room. It is a little troubling. Does Noah need a command to add something so simple as a window? Does it make a difference whether or not he had a window? Did that command have to be incorporated into the heavenly plans for an ark that would endure the ravaging flood?

A renowned Rosh Yeshiva, tragically lost his son to a debilitating disease at the prime of his life. Not long married, the son left a widow and a young child. The Rosh Yeshiva and his Rebbitzin were devastated at the loss and the shiva period was a most difficult time.

One of the hundreds of visitors was the Bluzhever Rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Spira, whose entire family was wiped out during the Holocaust. He sat quietly, taking in the pain of the bereaved family. Finally, when it was time to say something, Rabbi Spira turned to the Rosh Yeshiva and spoke. "Your loss is terrible, but at least your son will have a living remnant, his child. He will also have a resting place and stone where the family can visit. I do not even know where any of my children who were killed by the Nazis are buried." Then he added, "yet somehow Hashem has given me the strength to rebuild my family and life." Those words truly helped console the Rosh Yeshiva.

Sometimes when we are locked in our little boxes, we, too, need a window. When we think our world is crumbling and that we are doomed to a fate that is too difficult to bear, Hashem tells us to make a window. Sometimes, in our frustrations we have to look across the globe, or even across the river to know that despite our difficulties, others must endure a more difficult fate. And when we realize that they can endure, whether it is an Og holding on the back of the ark, or struggling with those lost amongst the ruins, we can remember that life inside the ark is not so bad after all.

Dedicated by Marty & Reva Oliner in memory of Reb Shimon Sumner of blessed memory.