Points to Ponder

Noach 5781

**נֹ֗חַ אִ֥ישׁ צַדִּ֛יק תָּמִ֥ים הָיָ֖ה בְּדֹֽרֹתָ֑יו  Noach was a Tzaddik in his generation (9:6) – Rashi** notes the different opinions in the Midrash. Some compare him positively in regard to Avraham and others do not. **Rav Amital ztl.** explained that Noach chose to quarantine himself while Avraham got close and brought his message to his people. Noach was afraid of the people insofar as they were gifted with technological advancement from Hashem and instead of using their spare time for stronger, better achievement, they had used it for idleness and idleness without purpose leads to destruction.

**עַ֖ל הָרֵ֥י אֲרָרָֽט: On the mountains of Ararat (8:4)** – Why is it important to know where the Teiva landed? **Rav Meir Goldvicht Shlita** explained that our job in life is to get close to Hashem even if it means from a distance like the solitude of Harei Ararat. We need to find means of a connection to Hashem and the connection always goes through Yirushalayim (hence the Yona brought the olive leaf from Har HaZeisim according to the Midrash) and even when as far from it as Harei Ararat are from Yirushalayim, there is always a place to connect to.

**עַ֖ל הָרֵ֥י אֲרָרָֽט: Because the nature of man is evil from his beginning (8:21**) – Is that true? Is man really inherently evil? **Ramban** notes that man has a nature toward negative and how he handles that pull toward the negative and how he chooses to handle that pull will determine if he goes toward the positive or evil. **Rav Hirsch ztl.** notes that this line is conditional – as if to say, EVEN if man’s inclination is toward evil, I shall not destroy my world. **Rav Kook ztl.** noted that the inherent nature of man is good but can be nurtured toward evil. **Rav Yitzchak Blazer ztl.** disagreed noting that man is granted 2 inclinations, one toward desire and one that is truly destructive. His job is to figure out how to handle each.

**אֶת־קַשְׁתִּ֕י נָתַ֖תִּי בֶּֽעָנָ֑ן  The Rainbow (9:13)** – The Talmud (Chagigah 16) notes that one who gazes at a rainbow has his eyesight diminished. Why this punishment? **Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl.** explained that the conditions of a rainbow – the cool weather and the clouds often bring on feelings of Yiush/despair. However, in the same way that light pierces the clouds, so too, Hashem can remove the despair. Avraham doesn’t despair, Moshe doesn’t despair but Noach does. He deals with the people in a cool, detached manner. He didn’t see the potential from beyond the clouds. Hence, it is a statement --- his eyes are weakened – he only saw the despair. We need to see beyond it.

**וַיִּקַּח֩ שֵׁ֨ם וָיֶ֜פֶת אֶת־הַשִּׂמְלָ֗ה Shem and Yefes took the cloak (9:23)** – The two men were rewarded with different rewards for the same action. Why? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl** explained that each was motivated by a different motivation. Shem was motivated by the ethical and Yefes was motivated by the rules of etiquette. Shem who was motivated by the ethical received the reward of the Mitzva of Tzitzis which are primarily worn under the garment while Yefes who was concerned about the look was given the reward of burial in the battle of Gog and Magog which is about Kavod HaBriyos. **Rav Sorotzkin ztl.** offered a different idea. He noted that while both did the men did the same mitzva, Shem did so with Hislahavus – with enthusiasm while Yefes followed. Thus, Shem received a reward in a living Mitzva while Yefes followed almost inactively, hence his reward came in death.

**אֲשֶׁ֥ר בָּנ֖וּ בְּנֵ֥י הָֽאָדָֽם: Hashem went down to see the city and the tower that the sons of man built(11:5)** **– Rashi** explains that the people were the children of Adam HaRishon. What is he adding? **Rav Eizik Ausband ztl.** explained that like Adam HaRishon, they were not thankful as they did not recognize where their goodness came from. This leads to people raising Kofrim. People who are Makir Tov recognize the name of Hashem forever.

**אֵ֚לֶּה** **תּֽוֹלְדֹ֣ת שֵׁ֔ם The generations from Noach to Avraham (11:10)** – The Mishna in Pirkei Avos notes that these are listed to show the degree of Hashem’s patience. The **Bartenura** explains that there is comfort in knowing that while our enemies continue to survive, in the end they all drown. But what can be said today as our Galus continues to grow? **Rav Reuven Feinstein Shlita** explained that the only reason pure evil is allowed to exist is because the time for retribution hasn’t come. As soon as that time comes, the reshaim will be annihilated as they were in the time of Noach. The Yeshuah is waiting to happen.

**Haftorah: For this is the waters of Noach to me (Yeshaya 54:9)** – Why is the flood referred to as Mei Noach? Wasn’t Noach the one who was saved by it? **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often cite the Midrash that explains that Noach didn’t daven to negotiate with Hashem the way Avraham did. The Jewish people help everybody – we need to fulfill our mission and expect that in its merit Hashem will fulfill the rest of the Possuk that Asher Nishbatee Migor Bach.