

Points to Ponder
Noach 5775

This is the destiny of Noach, Noach was a Tzaddik (6:9) – The Midrash Tanchuma expands on the virtue of the Yeshiva and the destiny of the holy Yeshivos that “were always there” and will always be present without the pain of the birthpangs of Moshiach. **Rav Yaakov Shapira Shlita quotes his father Rav Avraham Shapira ztl.** who asked why this midrashaic exposition appears in the context of Parshas Noach. He explains that unlike Avraham who, although identified as a Zaken V’Yosheiv B’Yeshiva managed to transcend the boundaries of the doors of the Yeshiva to influence a whole world, Noach – and his descendants Shem and Eiver merely sought to influence their students. Rav Shapira adds that before one can influence an outside, one needs to have a Yeshiva wherein he too, can enter to recharge spiritually and stay off the threat to the outside.

This is the way that you should make the Teivah – 300 amos long and fifty amos wide and 30 amos high (6:15) – **Rav Shlomo Amar Shlita** asked why the different sizes are specified for the Teivah. He explains – citing **the Vilna Gaon** – who explains that the Satan operates in many different ways in the world – sometimes known as Nachash and at other times as Samael. The Mikubalim know that the name Nachash has primarily evil in the center (the letter Chet) with sweeteners in the ends (nun and Shin). Similarly, the name Samael has the Samach Mem (the primary name of Samael) as evil and the Alef and Lamed as the sweeteners of enticement. At the time of the Mabul, Hashem saw just the evil (Rack Ra Kol HaYom) which meant that Evil shed its sweeteners (hence the use of the word Chamas <Chet, Mem, Samech>) and to counter it, Noach was told to build a Teiva of protection – 300 by 50 (Shin by Nun) and with a Height of 30 (V’El Ama Tichalena) to bring the sweeteners in which would protect Noach and the world’s future from Rack Ra. Rav Amar adds that if this is what we can learn from a single carpentry lesson in the Torah – think of the different secrets in each aspect of Torah life and mitzvah observance and the secrets contained in each of them.

And your influence will be felt on the animals and the birds and even the fish (9:2) – Why do the fish get special mention independent of other animals? **The Mikrei Dardikei (a student of the Chasam Sofer)** noted that this was not repayment for the human saving of the animals. It was the will of Hashem to have the world function this way. Therefore, even though the fish were not saved by the Teivah, they too, are subservient to man.

My rainbow I have placed in the clouds (9:13) – Why is the Rainbow the sign from Hashem that he will not destroy his world again? **Rav Chaim Amsallem Shlita** suggests that the generation of the flood was destroyed because of Chamas which means corruption. That is, the disparate parts of the world could not, and did not, function appropriately in society. Thus, Hashem had no choice but to destroy the society and create a new one that, by being stuck on a Teiva together, would need to function together and co-exist. The Rainbow is the sign that disparate things (colors) can come together by reaching in disparate ways toward the sky (heavens) and reach up, link up and enlighten the world.

And when I set my clouds on the land, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds (9:14) – **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that the symbol of the Rainbow was a reminder of the Ohr HaGanuz from the 6 days of creation that have been hidden inside each and every human. Even when it looks like we are pretty rotten and not deserving of being saved, the Rainbow reminds us and Hakadosh Baruch Hu that everyone has an Ohr HaGanuz and Tzaddikim who give up on the Dor (like Noach did) should reconsider – since Hashem does.

And Shem and Yefes took the garment (9:23) – Rashi notes that as a result of their involvement, Shem received the Mitzva of Tzitzis while Yefes received the promise that his children will merit burial in the future. The **Avnei Nezer (as cited by the Shem MiShmuel)** explains that while Shem was motivated internally to care for his father's Kavod and thus received a Mitzva in return which comes with Kavana, Yefes was motivated merely for external reasons – hence he followed – and Hashem rewarded him with an external reward as well – the limitation of embarrassment.

And the whole land spoke one language (11:1) – One needs to approach the story of Migdal Bavel and the sin carefully to fully appreciate the storyline. After all, even the intent of the builders is shrouded in Machlokes – was the tower a weapon built to fight Hashem or merely a pillar to keep the sky from falling down? Why did everyone join in? And what did mixing up the languages do to solve the problem? **Rav Eliyahu Schlessinger Shlita** suggests that the generation of Haflaga wanted world peace with everyone living in close proximity. The problem with this type of world peace is that it breeds complacency before its proper time and without the will of Hashem. Therefore, Hashem sent them apart in order to guarantee that they would not be complacent but rather that He runs the world. (It should be pointed out that **Rav Yosef Yehuda Leib Bloch zl. of Telz** takes a serious exception to this approach)

Haftora – For this is like the waters of Noach to me – By referring to the Mabul as Mei Noach, it sounds as if the Navi blames Noach for a role in its coming? **HaRav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that Noach was held somewhat culpable since he had the opportunity to Daven for the people of his generation and did not do so. Perhaps this is why some judge Noach derisively – for not seizing on the chance to Daven on behalf of his people.