

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT BERESHET-NOACH · 29 TISHREI-6 CHESHVAN 5770 · OCT. 17-24, 2009 · VOL. 17 NO. 1

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Bereshet

THE JURY IS STILL OUT

“Let us make Man...” (1:26)

Rosh Hashana marks the creation of the first man. “And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life...” (2:7). When G-d decided to make man, He ‘consulted’ with His Heavenly Court, and what can only be described as an argument broke out.

Truth said, “Don’t create him, for he is full of lies!” Righteousness said, “Create him, for sometimes he will behave righteously!” And so it went back and forth in the Heavenly Court. Some said “Create!” while others said “Don’t create!”

In the middle of this melee, G-d said, “Man has already been created.” Our Sages learn this from the phrase *Na’aseh Adam*, (Let us create man...) which can also be read as *Na’asah Adam*, “Man has already been created” — meaning that man was created in the midst of an existential doubt. When man was created, the jury was, quite literally, ‘out’.

Man came into this world in a state of *din*, of judgment — a judgment that was never resolved.

Every Rosh Hashana, on the anniversary of that Heavenly “argument”, the same question is re-awakened, “Create/Don’t create!” and each one of us is judged as to what extent we have answered that question — should man be created?

Shh! It’s Cheshvan

If you want someone to be quiet, if you want them to listen, you raise your finger to your lips and say “Shh!”

The sound of air flowing over lips is the universal sign to be still, to be quiet. The English word “hush” is connected with this sound. The same sound appears in the name of the month of *Cheshvan*, the month that begins this week. The root of the word *Cheshvan* is *chash*, which in Hebrew means quiet. The very name of the month commands us to be still, to be quiet. What is this stillness that is Cheshvan?

The month of Cheshvan says to us “Hush! Be still and listen to your heart! Listen to the quiet after the storm. Listen to the still small voice of the soul washed pure by the great storm of Tishrei!

In Hebrew the word for “the senses” is *chushim*, which is connected to the word *chash* — “silence.” For the senses operate in silence. They are the silent recorders of reality. They record in silence and they play back their message in silence. And to decode what our senses tell us when they replay the soul’s diary of the month of Tishrei, we must listen to the sounds of their silence and reflect to what extent have we answered that question of “Shall we make man?”

Noach

A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

“A window you shall make for the Ark...” (6:16)

The three fundamentals of real estate are, as any real estate agent will tell you, Location. Location. And location. One of the things you can’t change about a property is the view. A room with a view is a precious jewel.

When G-d instructed Noach to build the Ark, He included specific instructions to include a *tzohar*. *Tzohar* has two possible meanings. It can mean either a precious stone or it can mean a window. A precious stone might fill the Ark with a beautiful light as the sun’s rays were refracted, bathing the inside of the Ark with a multicolored glow. A precious stone

is to let the light in. A window is to look out. But what were they supposed to look out at? An empty waterscape of gray in every direction?

G-d wanted Noach to have a window on the world to see the world’s destruction and have a feeling of pity.

In life, it’s easy to think if I’m okay then the world’s okay. Life’s biggest jewel is to look out of our own arks and take up the yoke and the heartaches of others.

• Sources: Rashi, Rabbi Rafael Stephansky

Bereishet

In the beginning, G-d creates the entire universe, including time itself, out of nothingness. This process of creation continues for six days. On the seventh day, G-d rests, bringing into existence the spiritual universe of Shabbat, which returns to us every seven days. Adam and Chava — the human pair — are placed in the Garden of Eden. Chava is enticed by the serpent to eat from the forbidden fruit of the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and in turn gives the fruit to Adam. By absorbing “sin,” Adam and Chava render themselves incapable of remaining in the spiritual paradise of Eden and are banished. Death and hard work (both physical and spiritual) now enter the world, together with pain bearing and raising children. Now begins the struggle to correct the sin of Adam and Chava, which will be the main subject of world history. Cain and Hevel, the first two children of Adam and Chava, bring offerings to G-d. Hevel gives the finest of his flock and his offering is accepted, but Cain gives inferior produce and his offering is rejected. In the ensuing quarrel, Cain kills Hevel and is condemned to wander the earth. The Torah traces the genealogy of the other children of Adam and Chava, and the descendants of Cain until the birth of Noah. After the death of Sheith, mankind descends into evil, and G-d decides that He will blot out man in a flood which will deluge the world. However, one man, Noah, finds favor with G-d.

Noach

It is ten generations since the creation of the first human. Adam’s descendants have corrupted the world with immorality, idolatry and robbery, and G-d resolves to bring a flood which will destroy all the earth’s inhabitants except for the

righteous Noach, his family and sufficient animals to re-populate the earth. G-d instructs Noach to build an ark. After forty days and nights, the flood covers even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days the water starts to recede. On the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat. Noach sends out a raven and then a dove to ascertain if the waters have abated. The dove returns. A week later Noach again sends the dove, which returns the same evening with an olive leaf in its beak. After another seven days Noach sends the dove once more; the dove does not return. G-d tells Noach and his family to leave the ark. Noach brings offerings to G-d from the animals which were carried in the ark for this purpose. G-d vows never again to flood the entire world and designates the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. Noach and his descendants are now permitted to slaughter and eat meat, unlike Adam. G-d commands the Seven Universal Laws: The prohibition against idolatry, adultery, theft, blasphemy, murder, eating meat torn from a live animal, and the obligation to set up a legal system. The world’s climate is established as we know it today. Noach plants a vineyard and becomes intoxicated from its produce. Cham, one of Noach’s sons, delights in seeing his father drunk and uncovered. Shem and Yafet, however, manage to cover their father without looking at his nakedness, by walking backwards. For this incident, Canaan is cursed to be a slave. The Torah lists the offspring of Noach’s three sons from whom the seventy nations of the world are descended. The Torah records the incident of the Tower of Babel, which results in G-d fragmenting communication into many languages and the dispersal of the nations throughout the world. The Parsha concludes with the genealogy of Noach to Avram.

WHO HAS TO MOVE?

“From that land (Babylon) Ashur went forth and built Nineveh.” (*Bereishet* 10:11) Rashi thus explains Ashur’s departure:

Nimrod was inciting all the people to rebel against G-d by building a great tower, and Ashur’s children were listening to this dangerous demagogue. Ashur therefore decided to rescue his children from this evil influence by moving away.

This move is recorded in the Torah as a lesson for future

generations to avoid corrupting influences. The current controversy in Israel about deporting foreign non-Jews who are not legal residents (300,000 of them!) revolves around the dangerous influence which such an element can have on the Jewish population, not to mention the security threat.

Ashur had to move from his homeland in order to protect his children. Today it is the foreigners who must move in order to secure Israel forever.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

BEREISHET

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. G-d blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from G-d?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked"?
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Bereshet's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing *Eretz Canaan* from the Canaanites, we can respond that G-d, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave *Eretz Canaan* to us.
2. 1:4 - G-d saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He hid it for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Vegetation.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter *hey*, which has a numerical value of five. G-d created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die, the earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god. The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. G-d commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to the command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives, one with whom to have children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - Murder weapons.
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced. Therefore G-d took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

PARSHA Q&A ?

NOACH

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did G-d tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did G-d postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did G-d do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to “be fruitful and multiply” directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called Yiscah?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Noach's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noach building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noach would answer, “G-d is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - G-d told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” G-d surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amot.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from G-d, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noach’s disgrace to Cham. And because Cham stopped Noach from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noach cursed Cham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against G-d.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yiscah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yiscah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.

- Rabbi Banah measuring the tombs of the righteous, deciphering mysterious wills and advising courts
- Claims regarding drainpipes, ladders, windows and extensions which affect a neighbor
- Protecting privacy of a courtyard by restricting placement of windows and doors
- Protecting public thoroughfare against tunneling and extending
- Mourning for the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- What is included in the sale of a house or a field
- Describing the boundaries of the property sold
- Interpreting the language of a gift or a sale
- Does a seller sell in a generous fashion

Z.P.G. – THE ROAD TO DISAPPEARANCE

Circles obsessed with the Malthusian theory that population growth threatens the survival of mankind in a world of limited resources have made a Zero Population Growth (ZPG) their goal. This means that no parents should have more than two children to replace them when they leave this world, thus keeping the total world population at static level.

In our *gemara* we find an interesting view of what would happen to the Jewish people if they ascribed to ZPG.

“Since the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*,” says Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha, “we should really have decreed upon ourselves to abstain from eating meat and drinking wine (as an expression of mourning), but we cannot make decrees that most people will not be capable of obeying.”

He then adds: “Since the evil empire (the Romans) issued evil decrees and prevented us from learning Torah and doing *mitzvot*, we should really have decreed upon ourselves to

refrain from marrying and bringing children into the world and thus passively allowing for the seed of our Patriarch Avraham to disappear – but since people will not be able to abide by such a decree it is preferable to leave them alone.”

Tosefot raises a question in regard to the suggestion made for refraining from bringing children into the world. In contrast to the consumption of meat and wine mentioned in the first suggested decree, procreation is mandatory on the basis of the Torah command to “be fruitful and multiply.” (*Bereishet* 1:28). How then could we make a decree to ignore this command?

The answer given by *Tosefot* is that the decree would have been limited to continuing married life after minimal fulfillment of the mitzvah through the birth of one son and one daughter. Such a policy would not clash with the obligation of procreation, but would nevertheless have passively led to the disappearance of the Jewish people.

• *Bava Batra 60b*

What the SAGES Say

“The bed of a Torah sage has nothing beneath it except for storing his winter shoes during the summer and his summer shoes during the winter, while beneath the bed of the ignoramus is a whole treasure (of food and vessels – Rashbam).”

• *Rabbi Banah - Bava Batra 58a*

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- Fields which subsist on rain and those needing irrigation
- Which stones are considered an integral part of a field
- How many trees are sold along with a field
- The guardian who claims he returned item left in his custody and documented
- Does purchase of trees include the earth beneath them

THE ATTITUDE OF A SELLER

“In place of your fathers shall be your children” (*Tehilim* 45:17). This promise of King David to all of his people is cited as an argument in a dispute between two brothers who divided the estate inherited from their father. They each took one of the two adjoining fields. In his lifetime the father had access to the inner field through a path in the outer one. The heir of the outer one now wishes to deny his brother that same access unless he pays him for this right to trespass on his property.

It is suggested in our *gemara* that the reasoning of the Sage Rav in championing the right of the brother to access

through the other brother's field is based on the claim that he wishes to use that field in the very same fashion that his father did, a privilege indicated in the above-cited passage.

The conclusion of the *gemara*, however, is that Rav's position is actually based on an assumption which extends to other forms of litigation. This assumption of human nature is that one who sells property does so with a “good eye” – a generous attitude. Just as when one sells to another a cistern in his field we can assume that he also grants him free access to it through his field, so too do we assume that brothers who divide their inheritance also generously grant access to one another.

• *Bava Batra 65a*

What the SAGES Say

“When one gives a gift he does so with a ‘good eye’ – a generous attitude.”

• *Gemara - Bava Batra 65a*

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ETERNAL EDEN

From: Maribel

*Dear Rabbi,
Presumably, when G-d told Adam and Eve not to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, He meant it. So my question is, what did G-d have in mind for them had they not sinned, which I assume was supposed to happen?*

Dear Maribel,

There is a certain strain of commentaries that explore the idea that G-d foresaw, and therefore intended, that man would sin, and that was part of G-d's plan for enabling his prime creation to perfect itself through free-will decisions and ultimately attain G-d's image through the circuitous route of history as we know it.

But if we presume as you posit, namely that G-d intended for them to perfect themselves by overcoming that one, primal directive, the intended scenario would have been as follows:

Though created in G-d's image possessing the *potential* for perfection, Adam and Eve still needed to realize that potential through their own effort. This would have two basic results. One, they would be able to completely cleave to G-d, having effected their perfection. Two, they would deserve the reward of that closeness to G-d, having accomplished it themselves.

This means that if they had just observed that initial commandment, they would have perfected themselves,

realizing their G-d-like potential, and would have lived eternally with their purely begotten offspring in an eternal Eden in the presence of G-d. In fact, the mystical teachings of Judaism explain that if they had just elevated themselves that fatal first Friday, they would have ushered in their first Shabbat in a state of near perfection, which would then have been completed through the holiness of that day. After having attained that plane of holiness and purity, enabling them to understand G-d on the highest levels, G-d would have then allowed them to partake not only of the Tree of Knowledge, but also of the Tree of Life.

Having failed the test, rather than perfecting themselves, Adam and Eve incorporated within themselves the venomous toxin of rebellion against G-d, which was in turn commuted to their offspring, humanity. This initiated the contingent plan of world history whose more arduous and circuitous path to perfection we're still negotiating today. And until the Knowledge of G-d is attained through our own self-perfection, the elusive, esoteric elixir of Eternal Life is hidden in Eden.

Ultimately the Truth of G-d, righteousness and morality revealed by the Creator in the Torah to humanity will inspire the Knowledge necessary for mankind's return to Eden. In fact, Rambam writes that Christianity and Islam, whose truths lie solely in Judaism, play an important role in this spiritual transformation by weaning humanity from idolatry and immorality. Eventually, the unfortunate distortions of these religions will be reconciled with their source, the Torah. And all humanity, Jews as Jews, and non-Jews as Righteous Gentiles, will live the ethical monotheism revealed by G-d in the Torah for all mankind.

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Answer: It is a mitzvah and a great act of kindness to lend money to a Jew in need. If you lack the funds to serve as the lender the next best thing is to enable him to get a loan through your guarantee.

A word of caution!

Never guarantee more of a sum than you are prepared to lose. Your friend may be the most reliable person but circumstances beyond his control may prevent him from repaying the loan, so make sure that you don't take on more than you can handle.

A word of comfort!

The people running Free Loan Funds can assure you that it is not very common for guarantors to get stuck with the bill.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE PROPHETIC HANDSHAKE

“Give me your handshake as a promise that you will always observe Shabbat and then I will give you my blessing.” These were the words of the Chafetz Chaim to his student in Yeshivat Radin who came to receive his blessing before leaving the yeshiva to get married. Although he could not imagine why this was demanded of someone like himself who had always scrupulously observed Shabbat, he shook the sage's hand in making the commitment.

Years later he miraculously escaped the Holocaust and arrived in the US with his wife and four children. He succeeded in getting a job in a factory owned by a non-Jew who allowed him not to work on Shabbat. A couple of months later he was told that he would have to start working on Shabbat, and when he refused he was fired.

Without any livelihood his family began to suffer the pangs of hunger. The situation became so desperate that even his

very religious wife urged him to go back to work. No longer able to bear the cries of his starving children he boarded the train to the factory. But midway he recalled the handshake promise to his mentor and decided to return home. An hour later there was a knock on the door and there stood the boss who had fired him with a bundle of money in his hand. He warmly embraced our hero and told him the following story:

“I never intended to fire such a reliable worker as yourself, but did so to prove something to my partner. He insisted that any Jew would give up Sabbath observance in order to keep his job, and I disagreed. We then made a bet and my firing you was the only way we could decide who was right. I now want to give you the money I won in that bet and to inform you that I am promoting you, at a higher salary, to be in charge of a department. After all, who can be relied upon more than one who is faithful to his Creator!”

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES _____

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE ORIGINAL OLIVE LEAF

The olive leaf as a symbol of peace has its roots in the Torah's account of the Great Deluge. When Noah wished to determine whether the flood waters had subsided he sent a dove outside the ark. When it returned in the evening with an olive leaf in its mouth Noah realized that the waters had indeed subsided.



Our Talmudic Sages say that the olive leaf came from the Mount of Olives where it survived the devastating flood waters since the deluge did not affect Eretz Yisrael.

Thus was born the tradition of associating the olive leaf with peace.