BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT NOACH

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Professor and Mrs. Paul Socken in memory of his beloved mother, Rochel bas Yecheskel z"l (Rose Socken), on the occasion of her 67th yahrzeit (9 Cheshvan).

This issue is sponsored by Rabbi Dr. Mervyn & Joyce Fried & Family in honour of Joyce's father, מתתיהו בן אברהם הכהן ז"ל.

Dvar Torah Noach

RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

When Light Meets Darkness

One who visits Niagara Falls should know that they might be required to recite two berachot. Some recite the beracha of 'Oseh Ma'aseh Bereshit' on the wonders and the beauty of the falls, while some suggest the possibility of also reciting the beracha of 'Zocher HaBrit' that is recited upon seeing a rainbow, as sometimes a rainbow is seen amidst the falls.

Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch, in his responsa *Siach Nachum* siman 13, writes that one should not say the beracha of 'Zocher HaBrit,' which is typically recited upon seeing a rainbow. This is because the Torah, in our portion, tells us that the phenomenon of the rainbow, which serves as a sign that Hashem will not bring another flood upon the world, only refers to a rainbow which is found within a cloud, as it says, "When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds..." (Bereishit 9:14). Since the rainbow formed by Niagara Falls is not created as a result of a cloud but is rather a rainbow within water or a waterfall, one should not say the beracha of 'Zocher HaBrit.'

This raises the question: Why specifically when the rainbow is within a cloud should one say the beracha of 'Zocher HaBrit' and not when the rainbow appears in other ways?

Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin (*Nitzuzei Or Meir*, page 67) answers this question as follows: Hashem wanted to teach Noach a significant lesson through the rainbow within the cloud. Many commentators criticize Noach because, unlike Abraham, he did not pray for the people of his generation to repent, as Avraham did regarding the people of Sodom. To the extent that in the Haftarah, the floodwaters are called "Noach's waters," as if to suggest that the blame for the Flood was on Noach for not praying for the people of his generation. Rabbi Shapiro explains that Noach did not believe in the ability of the people of his generation to repent, and therefore, he did not pray for them or make an effort to bring them to a better path.

Hashem wanted to teach Noach that he was wrong. Hashem wanted to teach that every person, no matter where they are, has the ability to repent. He conveyed this message through the rainbow within the cloud. The cloud is the thickest form of darkness, a darkness which is tangible. But even in the most profound darkness of the cloud, **if light strikes it at the right angle and place, the meeting of light and darkness can produce the beautiful colors of the rainbow.** Hashem wanted to teach that even if you did not succeed once, twice, or even three times in bringing the people of your generation to repent and did not inspire them to return to the right path, if you aim for the right point, this point can influence the people of your generation, even those in the darkest place like the cloud, to bring out the most beautiful light, like that of the rainbow.

Today, the Jewish people in the world are experiencing a different type of darkness. This darkness feels much like that of the cloud. Many feel that there is no light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. But just as in the time of Noach, where light was able to penetrate the darkness and create the beautiful colorful rainbow, so too we have faith that Hashem can shine a new light upon us, that from this great upheaval, from this extreme darkness, Hashem can bring forth His light, which will produce the beautiful appearance of the diverse colors of the rainbow.

May we all merit the fulfillment of our tefillah we say every morning, "*Or Chadash Al Tzion Tair*"; may Hashem bring upon us a new light, a light that will get rid of this darkness, and we will experience "*Layehudim Hayta Ora Vesimcha,*" all Jews will have light and happiness.

TANACH RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS

Yeshayahu 61 – Noach 5784

The upbeat message of Chapter 60 continues in Chapter 61. The section begins with news of a future utopian existence for the Jewish people, rivaling the most positive predictions found anywhere in Tanach. It concludes with a description of the union of Hashem and the Jewish people, comparing it to a wedding.

Yeshayahu prefaces his prediction with the words, "A spirit of Hashem Elokim was upon me," informing his listeners that the promises are not his own invention. The remarkable message comes from Hashem. The prophet declares that Hashem has charged him to tell the oppressed, the brokenhearted, the prisoners and the mourners that their suffering is over. Ashes will be replaced with splendour, mourning with joy, and depression with a cape of glory. (The Talmud [Bava Batra 60b] learns from this verse the practice of placing ash on a groom's head in the spot where tefillin sit; tefillin are called "splendour" [61:1-3].)

The renewal will include restoration of our ruined cities. More, strangers will take care of our flocks and vineyards, while we will be supported as servants of Hashem. Our former shame will be replaced with honour, and we will rejoice (61:4-7).

Tell the oppressed and brokenhearted that their suffering is over.

The prophet then makes a striking statement, explaining that Hashem will do all of this because of His love of justice and His hatred of theft and corruption. This is not about a covenant or chosenness; it is about just reward for historic greatness. The utopia-to-be will set affairs right, rewarding our righteousness and advertising our status as Hashem's nation (61:8-9). The Talmud (Succah 30a) comments on Hashem's stated abhorrence for corruption that this is meant to teach us to be honest.

A voice then declares that it will rejoice in Hashem; Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra says the speaker is the Jewish nation, but Radak contends that it is Jerusalem. The speaker will be clothed in splendour, like a groom and bride. Like the earth bringing forth new life, so Hashem will cause righteousness and glory before the eyes of the nations (61:10-11). These verses are the beginning of the seventh and final haftorah of consolation after Tisha b'Av. Further, for centuries Ashkenazi communities have replaced the normal haftorah with this haftorah on the Shabbat of an *aufruf*.

MACHSHAVA RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING, SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS

Week 2: Spirit of the Law in Interpersonal Laws

In three places, Ramban argues that the Torah's mitzvot are not intended as an exhaustive list of man's responsibilities in this world. In fact, he contends that providing such a list would have been impossible. Instead, the Torah's commandments are representative of what God wants. In cases where a specific law does not dictate the proper course of action, one is to be guided by the spirit of the law that emerges from the mitzvot that are explicitly enumerated. As Rabbi Menachem Leibtag suggests, the Ramban sees the mitzvot as the dots in a connect-the-dots picture, and the spirit is that picture that emerges. From this basic sketch, it is clear that to derive the spirit of the law, one must deeply understand the letter of Torah law to accurately extrapolate to other cases. Going beyond the letter of the law is not the same as a general call to "be a good person" as the contours of one's actions must be guided by Torah.

In the case of interpersonal laws, Ramban derives this from the Torah's exhortation of ve'asita hayashar vehatov, you should do the straight and good. (Devarim 6:18)

"At first he [Moses] stated that you are to keep His statutes and His testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought as well, to do what is good and right in His eyes, for He loves the good and the right. Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbors and friends, and all his various transactions, and the ordinances of all societies and countries... Thus [a person must seek to refine his behavior] in every form of activity, until he is worthy of being called "good and upright." (ibid, Chavel translation)

An example of this principle is the law of dina d'bar metzra, a rabbinic law that one must give a neighbor first right to buy property before offering it to outsiders, a law which is derived from this verse.

HALACHA RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

A Shabbos Off in The Army

In light of the difficult situation prevailing in Israel, I wanted to present a question from the book *Hilchot Tzava* by Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon (vol 1, page 311). May the Zechus of Torah defend and protect our brothers and sisters in Israel.

Question: A soldier who received leave from the IDF to go home for Shabbat, is he allowed to go home when there is a chance they might call him back on Shabbat?

Answer: The Talmud in Shabbat 19a recounts that one should not sail in a boat three days before Shabbat. The medieval Rabbis provided a number of reasons for this. According to the Rif (Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi), the reason is to avoid desecrating the joy of Shabbat, as a person may be uncomfortable on the boat during Shabbat. According to Rabbi Zerachiah HaLevi (famously known as Baal Hamaor), the reason is the concern that while being in a potentially dangerous place (at sea) during Shabbat, one might come to violate Shabbat in a situation of saving lives.

The implication from the words of the Baal Hamaor is that in the days leading up to Shabbat, a person should not put themselves in a situation that might lead to a desecration of Shabbat, even though it may be permissible due to the general principle that "pikuach nefesh" (saving a life) overrides Shabbat. However, according to the Rif's opinion, it would be permissible.

The Shulchan Aruch, in Siman 248, rules in accordance with both of these opinions, and in seif 4, he indeed states that one should not travel by sea three days before Shabbat when there is a reasonable concern of Shabbat desecration.

At first glance, one might conclude from this that a soldier is not allowed to go home when there is a reasonable concern that they might be called back on Shabbat and would be involved in Chilul Shabbat.

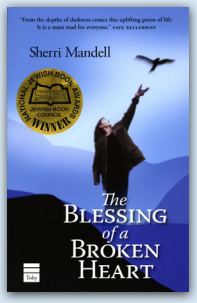
However, there is a very significant leniency that permits a soldier to go home on Shabbat to visit his family. The Shulchan Aruch says that it is permissible to sail three days before Shabbat when it is for a mitzvah (commandment). What is considered to be a mitzvah? The Rema is lenient and says that even visiting a friend is considered a mitzvah.

Consequently, it can be inferred that when a soldier goes to visit his family, it is like visiting a friend, which is considered a mitzvah. In addition, a soldier visiting his family without a doubt, provides himself and his family encouragement and support, and therefore, he would be allowed to go home for Shabbat, even if there is a concern that they might call him back on Shabbat.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymann@torontotorah.com.

BOOK CLUB RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG, MAGGID SHIUR

Week 2: Closing Our Eyes



The Blessing of a Broken Heart
By Sherri Mandell
The Toby Press, 2003

"In our world, so little makes sense. God's divinity is concealed. When we say the Shema, *'Hear O Israel,' the most fundamental Jewish prayer, we cover our eyes in order to concentrate. But covering our eyes is also an admission that we don't know."* (The Blessing of a Broken Heart, page 27)

Disappointingly, and sometimes frustratingly, we will never fully understand Hashem's reasons and motivations. Even as we declare Hashem's oneness, we close and cover our eyes, indicating that even in this fundamental statement of belief, we still have gaps in our comprehension.

Indeed, even Moshe Rabbeinu himself asks to see Hashem's glory, to fully understand His actions. And yet, the Torah describes that Hashem allows him to see only His back, not His face (see Shemot 33:18-23). Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor and others suggest that this indicates that even the greatest prophet was denied the ability to fully grasp Hashem's essence.

Recent events caused many of us to ask difficult and important questions. Not the least of which is demanding of Hashem some explanation for His actions. As Sherri Mandell writes, however, Hashem's divinity is concealed. We may ask the questions, but we must accept that, at least right now, in this world, all answers will be wanting.

May the day soon come when we can finally understand our suffering, when we can truly see Hashem's loving face.

The Blessing of a Broken Heart *can be purchased from Koren Publishers at tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD. Use the code TorontoTorah for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website.*

TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Rashi (Bereishit 6:9)

IN HIS GENERATIONS—Some of our Rabbis explain it to his credit: He was righteous even in his generation; it follows that had he lived in a generation of righteous people he would have been even more righteous...Others, however, explain it to his discredit: [only] in comparison with his own generation he was accounted righteous...

Questions to Discuss

- How much influence does society have on our actions and way of thinking?
- Living in his own generation, did Noach have the potential to rise to the level of Avraham?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a challah and six bilkas from Richmond Bakery to enjoy at your Shabbat table next week!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
Sunday	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 AM	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Seuda	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz and Rabbi Mann
Monday	The Torah: A Psychic Turn. Psychological Theories in the Eyes of Tanach	Zoom	2:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha – Towards Tishrei	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	University Women's Beit Midrash	Yeshivat Or Chaim	7:45 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
Tuesday	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:15 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Finding Meaning and Connection in the Psalms from the Siddur	Zoom	10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Contemporary Halacha: Tishrei Edition	Clanton Park	After Mincha/Maariv	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Eliyahu HaNavi: A Prophet of Fire & Water	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
Thursday	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi Beit Midrash)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
Sun–Thu	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30–9:30 PM	

SPECIAL EVENT

Rabbi Yehuda Mann - BAYT scholar in residence	BAYT	Shabbat, October 20-21

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

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