

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Noach

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in honour of the yahrtzeit of Joyce's father, מרתיהו בן אברהם ז"ל

#KeepingItTogether

Rabbi David Ely Grundland

This Shabbat, 340 cities around the world, including Toronto, will unite to observe Shabbat. Since Rabbi Zeev Warren Goldstein, chief Rabbi of South Africa, successfully initiated the project last year, this "Shabbat Project" has become synonymous with Jewish unity, centred on Shabbat.

Parashat Noach describes two generations that were also united: The first was united in their fundamental belief in the rights of the individual at the expense of the community, and the second was united in their belief in the community to the exclusion of the individual. The former is known as *Dor HaMabul* – the Generation of the Flood, and the latter as *Dor HaPalagah* – the Generation of the Dispersion.

Communal Degeneration

Bereishit 6:11 states, "the land became depraved before G-d, and the land became full of *chamas*". We see two stages – depravity, and then *chamas*.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 57a) teaches that the initial "depravity" refers to idolatry and immorality (*arayot*). A midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 31:6) adds murder to the list. Each sin attacks the institutions that make a functional community: idolatry allows individuals to ignore Hashem's instructions, *arayot* attacks the institution of marriage (Sefer HaChinuch 35), and murder attacks life in general. And yet, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 108a) notes that *chamas*, not the initial depravity, caused Hashem to destroy the world. Apparently, *chamas* added a critical element.

Rashi translates *chamas* as "theft", but a midrash (ibid. 31:5) differentiates between theft and *chamas*: "Rabbi

Chanina taught: *Chamas* is not worth even a minimal coin." This midrash explains that people in *Dor HaMabul* would steal such small items that the courts would not prosecute them. The extreme evil inherent in *chamas* is that there is harm caused, but the one harmed has no legal recourse. Where justice cannot be pursued, the community collapses entirely.

The initial depravity of idolatry, immorality, and murder, included the worst of sins, each requiring death before transgression. (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:2) However, these sins can be addressed judicially, to maintain order. In *chamas*, when there is no means of obtaining any justice, the community is beyond repair.

Dysfunctional Communalism

Generations after the flood, the Torah describes the rise of *Dor HaPalagah* as "of a single language and a single purpose". This is the generation that built the Tower of Babel. (Bereishit 11) By examining the "single purpose" of *Dor HaPalagah*, one may gain some insight into their sin, and their punishment of dispersion.

The generation's stated purpose was to build a tower reaching to the heavens, and to make for themselves a name. (Bereishit 11:4) Seforno suggests that they intended to place an idol in the tower; when observing the awesome stature of the tower, people would unite behind the idol. Certainly, this warrants punishment, but their punishment of dispersion seems inappropriate, given the Torah's emphasis on the peace and unity which they possessed. Per a baraita which the sages appended to the conclusion of all mishnah (Uktzin

3), Hashem owns no greater vessel for blessing than peace! Why, then, was this generation punished with the destruction of peace and unity?

Perhaps there was a flaw in their unity. Prior to the story of *Dor HaPalagah*, the Torah describes Nimrod as a warrior and hunter. (Bereishit 10:8-9) Rashi contends that Nimrod was so named because he desired to rebel (from the Hebrew *mered*) against Hashem, and that he was the impetus behind the rebellion of *Dor HaPalagah*. Furthermore, Rashi suggests that Nimrod's "hunting" was his ability to convince people to follow his rebellion against G-d. If so, then perhaps their unity was defective in that it was a campaign against G-d; G-d values unity and peace, but not toward this end.

A Community of Individuals

The Torah, through the account of *Dor HaMabul*, expresses that apparently minor actions can undermine community. Every individual, through their actions, can truly impact the greater community and can make a lasting difference. In the account of *Dor haPalagah*, we learn that as a community we achieve unity by glorifying Hashem's name and not simply by elevating ourselves.

A midrash (Shemot Rabbah 25:12) records Rabbi Levi's statement, "If Israel were to observe one Shabbat properly, the redemption would come." Let us recognize the significance of the Shabbat Project and the impact it can have on each of us, and on the community. Let us keep Shabbat together to glorify Hashem's Name, and merit the blessing of shalom!

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We are grateful to
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The Nineteen Letters

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch
Originally printed in 1836 in Altona as *Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum*, by Ben Uziel
Available in English translation

Why was this book written?

Is the Torah relevant for a Jew who is exposed to the the ideals of modern, “enlightened” society? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s life (1808-1888) was devoted to confirming a positive answer for this question.

In 1835, Rabbi Hirsch finished writing a magisterial work, *Horeb*. In *Horeb*, Rabbi Hirsch attempted to re-create Rambam’s Guide for the Perplexed, for his own generation. Explaining the lessons of each mitzvah, and placing the mitzvot in logical categories, Rabbi Hirsch sought to enable the new, emancipated, free Jew to connect once again with his ancient tradition.

When Rabbi Hirsch, armed with the thick manuscript, approached different publishers, he soon discovered they were not willing to take the financial risk of printing *Horeb*. At the age of 27, Rabbi Hirsch was still young, and largely unknown, and his book seemed too presumptuous. It was suggested that Rabbi Hirsch write what could be called a “promo” – a summary of the main ideas of *Horeb* – in order to test the demand for the larger book. The

shortened book would be printed under a pseudonym: Ben Uziel.

What does this book say?

Rabbi Hirsch decided to go beyond outlining his main points; he wrote the new book, *The Nineteen Letters*, as a dialogue between a young rabbi named Naphtali (a name often associated with the Yiddish *Hirsch*) and his young friend Benjamin.

Benjamin was portrayed as a German Orthodox Jew who had lost his convictions through contact with the modern world and Enlightenment-era writings. To Benjamin, Judaism seemed an archaic relic of a worldview that must undergo drastic reform, or perish altogether.

Responding to Benjamin, Naphtali sets up Judaism as an eternally constant religion, applicable in all times and places, carrying in it the fundamental truths revealed to us at Mount Sinai. A few of Rabbi Hirsch’s assertions in the book, which stem from this starting point, are:

- Judaism must be learned from within, without ideals and principles from the non-Jewish world.
- Judaism’s goal is not the happiness sought by modern liberalism, but service of G-d, and the Jewish nation should serve as models of this principle.

- Some mitzvot must be understood as symbolic acts, meant to instill values and educate us.
- Social emancipation is not a goal in itself, but a tool to be utilized to achieve Judaism’s goals.

Is this book still relevant?

The Nineteen Letters immediately became a great success, and was printed in many editions. The ideas presented in the book suggested answers to the haunting questions of identity that the Western European Jew of the time faced. In fact, the book’s effect far outdid that of *Horeb*, the original work. Heinrich Graetz, the famous Jewish historian, was one of the young men who were deeply moved by the book; he actually came to live and learn from Rabbi Hirsch for three years, later calling Rabbi Hirsch “an unforgettable teacher”. The small book was the first step in Rabbi Hirsch’s journey to become one of the founding fathers of today’s Jewish Orthodoxy.

The setting has changed from Rabbi’s Hirsch time, but we still face many of the fundamental questions he dealt with: how to be a Jew in a secular world, how to approach non-Jewish values and ideas, and how to understand the goals of practical mitzvot. For development of proper solutions to these questions, this book is indispensable.

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613 Mitzvot: #405: Wake Up!

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Bamidbar 29:1 names Rosh haShanah a “day of trumpeting”, and this is understood to refer to trumpeting with a shofar, specifically. We blow the shofar in various ways – *tekiah*, *shevarim*, *teruah*, and *shevarim-teruah* – in order to satisfy multiple customs. We blow an initial, independent set of blasts (*tekiot d’meyushav*), and then a second set of blasts during the amidah, linked to its central blessings (*tekiot d’memad*). Our practice is to conclude musaf with a third set of blasts, to achieve a total of 100 shofar blasts. (Tur Orach Chaim 592)

The Talmud (Rosh haShanah 16a) records a simple question: “Why do we trumpet [via the shofar]?” To which it gives the equally simple answer, “The Merciful One told us to trumpet!” Indeed, Rambam echoes this simple explanation of the mitzvah, writing, “Trumpeting with the shofar on Rosh haShanah is a decree of the text.” (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4)

Despite the above, Rambam also explains that the shofar’s blast serves as a wake-up call, summoning us to examine our deeds, repent, and remember our Creator. The Tur (Orach Chaim 581) offers a similar explanation for the practice of blowing shofar in the month of Elul, leading up to Rosh haShanah; for support, he cites Amos 3:6, “Will the shofar be blown in the city, and the nation not tremble?!” [The Tur also records a separate reason to blow

shofar at the start of Elul: to commemorate the forty days on which Moshe was atop Mount Sinai, receiving the second set of *luchot*.] Sefer haChinuch embellishes, “A person is a material entity, and so he will not awaken without something to awaken him. It is like wartime, when they trumpet, and even shriek, in order to be aroused well for war. On Rosh haShanah, too, the day marked from the start for the citizens of the world to be judged... one must awaken his nature to seek mercy regarding his sins, from the Master of mercy...”

The mitzvah of blowing shofar is biblical, and so it overrides any rabbinic concern regarding use of musical instruments on Yom Tov. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shofar 2:6) However, when Rosh haShanah is Shabbat we do not blow shofar, lest one transport the shofar to an expert through an area which is not bounded by an eruv. (Succah 42b) It might seem odd that rabbis should be able to prohibit fulfillment of a biblical mitzvah, but this is acceptable because the mitzvah is only omitted via inaction. (Yevamot 90a-b) Further, the sages did not eliminate the mitzvah eternally, but only under certain circumstances. (Magen Avraham 588:4) [For further discussion of the authority of rabbis to cause Jews to fail to fulfill a mitzvah, see Minchat Chinuch 9:1 and Sfat Emet to Beitza 8a.]

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Biography

Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

[Note: This Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss is not the author of the 20th century *Minchat Yitzchak*.]

Born in Pressburg in 1873, Rabbi Yitzchak ben Rabbi Yeshayah Yissachar Ber Weiss was taught by Rabbi Simcha Bunim Sofer, grandson of the famed Chatam Sofer. He excelled in his studies from a young age, and was ordained as a rabbi at the age of twenty.

In 1904, Rabbi Weiss was appointed to serve as Rabbi of a small community near Pressburg, and twelve years later he became the Chief Rabbi of Vrbove, a larger community, where he also founded and headed a yeshiva. Rabbi Weiss was well-respected by his peers, as evidenced by the inclusion by Rabbi Yissachar Techtel of his correspondence with Rabbi Weiss, in his own published works. Rabbi Weiss was murdered by the Nazis in 1942, and most of his writings were lost; his family published fragments of his responsa in the work *Siach Yitzchak*.

The responsa found in *Siach Yitzchak* are brief, but they are useful as they address practical, common questions. The accompanying translation provides one example; other responsa address the questions of praying in a room with a cross (Responsum 45), reciting *kiddush levanah* before Tishah b'Av (Responsum 195), invoking angels in prayer (Responsum 421), naming a child for a wicked person (Responsum 441), turning one's back to the Aron Kodesh (Responsum 450), and praying for terminally ill patients (Responsum 459). Many of his responsa are simply citations of sources, rather than statements of a personal view.

(Biographical information courtesy of Bar Ilan University's Responsa Project)

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Torah and Translation

Chatan Maftir?

Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss

Siach Yitzchak 321

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

שמעתי מאנשים אשר היו תמהים, למה קורים להשלישי שקורא מפטיר בשמחת תורה בשם חתן, למה יקרא הוא בשם זה, הלא אינו משלים ואינו מתחיל. ואם באמת גם הוא חתן תמים, למה לא יאמרו לו גם מרשות כמו לשאר החתנים...

וב"ה עלה בדעתי, למה שראיתי בברכי יוסף סי' תרס"ט אות ב', וכ"ל, ומפטיר ויהי אחרי וגו', אפשר לתת טעם אחר דסליקו אורייתן ומהדרי לאתחולי שלא יקטרג, וכי היכי דחשו למקטרג להתחיל בראשית, ה"ג דלא ימצא מקום לומר אין עסקם אלא בתורה ותו לא, מתחילין נביאי דהוא ריש יהושע, עכ"ד. ועפ"י טוב טעם ודעת הלזה א"ש שגם המפטיר נקרא בשם חתן, באשר הוא המתחיל בקריאת נ"ך, דהרי תחלת דבר ביהושע סי' א' בקרא מקרא דאפטרטא.

ומה שאין אומרים לו מרשות, הוא בכדי שלא להשוות קריאת נ"ך לקריאת התורה, ע"ד שכתבו התוס' במגילה [כ"ג ע"א ד"ה כיון], שלזאת מפסיקים עם קדיש לפני המפטיר, להורות נתנו שאיננו כל כך חובה.

ועוד יש לומר, באשר המפטיר הלזה קורא פטירת משה רבנו ויהי אחרי מות משה, וטרם הקריאה ואחריה אומרים קינות על פטירת משה, עיין בכלבו סי' כ' וסי' נ"ב, לזאת נקרא בשם חתן, ע"ד גמ' נדה [מ"ד ע"א], והרי הוא לאביו ואמו כחתן שלם, ע"ד סגי נהור.

[Preface: On Simchat Torah, the person receiving the final aliyah of the Torah is called up as *chatan Torah*. We then begin the new annual cycle, and the person receiving the opening aliyah is called up as *chatan Bereishit*. Both of them are summoned to the Torah with an honorary "*MeiReshut*" tribute. We then recite the normal *maftir* aliyah for Shemini Atzeret; this person is called to the Torah without fanfare, but in some communities he is called *chatan Maftir*.]

I have heard people express surprise: why do we call the third, who reads *maftir* on Simchat Torah, by the title of *chatan*? Why should he be called by that name? He neither completes nor starts! And if, in truth, he is considered a "perfect *chatan*", why do they not recite the *MeiReshut* introduction for him, like for other *chatanim*?...

With G-d's help, I have had the following thought: I saw in *Birkei Yosef* (669:2), "The *maftir* reads the haftorah from Yehoshua 1. We may offer another explanation [for why we read this haftorah]: We conclude the Torah and then begin again in order to prevent any accusation [that we are not interested in further Torah study]. Just as we are concerned about an accuser regarding starting *Bereishit*, so, too, lest one find room to say that we are involved in Torah and nothing else, we begin the Prophets, with Yehoshua 1." Based on this good reason and wisdom, it makes sense that the *maftir* should also be titled a *chatan*, since he begins the reading of the Prophets, for the haftorah reading is the start of Yehoshua.

As far as not reciting a *MeiReshut* for him, this is to avoid equating the reading of the Prophets with the reading of the Torah, as *Tosafot* (*Megilah* 23a) wrote that this is why we interrupt with *kaddish* before *maftir*, demonstrating that it is not of the same level of obligation [as the Torah reading].

One could also say that since this *maftir* reads of the death of Moshe Rabbeinu, "And it was after Moshe's death," and before this reading and after it we read poems of mourning regarding Moshe's death – see *Kol Bo* 20 and 52 – this is why he is titled *chatan*. It is like *Niddah* 44a [regarding a deceased infant r"l], "He is to his father and mother like a complete *chatan*," meant euphemistically.

1 Cheshvan is Shabbat

Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid Segal was born in 1660. [This is not the Rabbi Yehudah heChasid who authored Sefer Chasidim in the 12th century.] He travelled to different communities in Poland preaching, among other topics, the importance of living in Israel. In 1697, he led 31 families from Poland to Israel. For three years, they travelled to other European countries, where Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid influenced many more people to join their convoy. At the end of the three years, 1,500 people had joined together to make Jerusalem their new home. Unfortunately, many people contracted illnesses during the trip, and close to one-third of the group died before arriving in Israel.

On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5361, (October 14, 1700), the group arrived in Jerusalem, joining the 1,200 Jews already living there. Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid secured a piece of land where they would build a synagogue. Tragically, Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid passed away a few days after arriving in

Jerusalem. Without their leader, the new arrivals encountered many difficulties; many returned to their countries of origin, and some even converted to Islam or Christianity.

The newly arrived Jews struggled to pay the workers building their synagogue, infuriating the local Arab community. The Arabs eventually burned down the synagogue and forbade any Ashkenazi Jew from living in Jerusalem; this was enforced for more than a century. The synagogue was rebuilt in the 1860's and was called the "Churvah of Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid"; it came to be known as simply "the Churvah Shul". (The synagogue was destroyed in 1948, and then rebuilt in 2010.)

Although most of the people who accompanied Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid were not able to build successful lives in Israel, their aliyah remained significant. It opened the door for many other groups to make aliyah in the 18th century, forming the core of a new community of Jews in Israel.

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Weekly Highlights: October 25 – 31 / 1 Cheshvan – 7 Cheshvan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Shabbat Oct. 25				
10:15 AM	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Meshech Chochmah	Clanton Park	
After musaf	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Two Names of Noach	Zichron Yisroel	Shabbat Project Program
4:15 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Of Statues and Idols	BAYT	Not this week
Sun. Oct. 26				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah: Using Timers on Shabbat	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
Tues. Oct. 28				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Good and Evil in the Careers of Bereishit	Adath Israel	
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Iyov (Job)	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. Oct. 29				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Jew at War, Week 2 <i>The "Just War"</i>	Beth Emeth	
8:45 PM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Fighting a Jewish War, Week 1 <i>Amalek and the 7 Nations</i>	BAYT	
Thu. Oct. 30				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua: Achan's Sin	49 Michael Ct. Thornhill	For women
Fri. Oct. 31				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemithah: A Non-Jew's Land, Part 2	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

OUR MISSION: TO ENGAGE, INSPIRE AND EDUCATE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF THE GREATER TORONTO AREA. WE APPLY OUR TORAH HERITAGE TO THE DAILY LIVES OF MODERN JEWS, THROUGH CLASSES, DISCUSSIONS AND CHAVRUTOT IN OUR HOME BEIT MIDRASH AND OUR BNEI AKIVA SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS THE SYNAGOGUES, CAMPUSES AND WORKPLACES OF THE GTA.

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