



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Noach 5781

### A Credo for the Pulpit

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered October 30, 1954)

I believe that the first in this season's series of Late Services is the appropriate time for a talk on "A Credo for the Pulpit", a general outline of the aims of the Jewish pulpit in general, and this pulpit in particular. So often is the pulpit exploited for book-reviews, political orations, sociological observations, psychiatric advice and personal opinions, that a public airing of its functions, responsibilities and aims should be healthy for both Rabbi and Congregation.

The pulpit, to my mind, must fulfill three basic functions: to teach, to preach, and to reach. These three do more than rhyme; they establish an inner rhythm, by which Rabbi and Congregation harmoniously rise to the service of G-d.

The main function of the Rabbi has always been to teach. The pulpit was always geared more to the lecture than to the sermon. The principal object was to teach, to inform, to let the people enjoy the pulpit as an educational tool to open up for them new vistas, new understanding, new horizons that they never realized existed in Judaism.

Study, in Judaism, is regarded as a form of Service or Worship. "Talmud Torah" was not only a way leading to the observance of G-d's mitzvos, but in itself a mitzvah of major importance. For generations after the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of exile, Jews studied, assiduously, the Laws of Temple Sacrifice and laws applicable only in time of national independence - because the study of Torah is in and of itself a sacred deed, whether practical at the moment or not. The word Mishna, indicating the great body of Oral Law, our Sages pointed out, spells "Neshama", or "soul", when its letters are rearranged. For study is itself a spiritual achievement of no mean proportions.

Historically, that was the primary function of the Drashah, the sermon. It followed the reading of the Torah and explained it. The Rabbi rose to his highest function when he was not only a shepherd guiding his flock, but a teacher

instructing his students. Of course, it is ridiculous to regard a once-a-week lecture as sufficient education. But it was, and should remain, a mighty educational device.

The second function of the pulpit is to preach. There are times when a Rabbi must not only inform but also remind and even sometimes demand; not only deliver a lecture, but lecture; not only defend by teaching, but protest by preaching. And while, most of the time, teaching is more important, preaching is both more dangerous and more difficult.

It is more dangerous, because to preach means that you must sometimes say things which are unpopular, and risk disfavor in the eyes of the community. "Certainly," you will say, "a Rabbi naturally is expected to do that." The trouble is that most people want the Rabbi to preach critically only of somebody else. And basically, the modern conception of the Rabbi as a combination of master of ceremonies and Temple company-representative and Publicity Agent, does not encourage free expression. In such a role, it is extremely difficult to articulate honest criticism even by subtle indirection. Yet, it must be done.

And it is difficult too. It is difficult because preaching, according to the popular understanding, presupposes a superiority on the part of the preacher. We say: Practice what you preach. Faced with such a challenge, it is terribly difficult to even get near the pulpit. Thus, when I preach Sabbath observance, I must be one hundred percent sure that I observed the Sabbath as required. And how difficult real Sabbath observance is!

If I preach about honesty, I must be willing to publish my tax returns in the public press. If I urge generosity, I must have already uprooted every last vestige of hatred and grudge from my heart. Can anyone, anywhere, say that he has done all these?

My only consolation lies in the chassidic interpretation

of preaching. It is told of the great Baal Shem Tov, that he heard a Maggid, or preacher, berating his audience for their poor observance and their bad behavior. "When the great Baal Shem could bear it no longer, he turned upon the Maggid and said to him, "How dare you so reproach these kindly people? True, they might have sinned, but how would you know the temptations to sin? You learned even as a youth to control yourself, to resist temptation until now it no longer affects you, you have all your life lived in purity, and therefore it's easy for you to lead an exemplary life. But if you were in their position you might not do any better." In other words, preaching is not an address by a saint to a sinner, it is a cooperative venture by a community of sinners who want to be saints. The Rabbi must not preach at his congregation. He must preach with them. In his protests and tirades and rebukes, he must include himself, always realizing that he is as humble and poor as the rest; and the congregation must remember that the Rabbi knows this, and therefore not question his right to say his piece. And above all, all must remember that "these are a kindly people", that all Jews have in them a spark of the Divine, and that even more than chipping away their evil, must, their goodness be brought out.

Jewish preaching in general must aim at bringing Jews closer to G-d and His Torah - *Ve'hevey mekarvan Le'Torah*. And to achieve that, in the setting of our time and our place, it is of the utmost necessity to protest two tendencies which have eaten their way into our spiritual fabric. These two tendencies, which have done so much towards keeping our people from becoming "near to Torah", the cult of mediocrity and the pressure for conformity. One tells us that we must be average, that it is best for us to adjust to society, no matter what kind of society it is. To be superior means to be neurotic, and that is a bad, bad word. We have become communicants in the cult of mediocrity. And the second tells us that we must not be different from anyone else, we must conform to the tastes and institutions and beliefs of the majority. The two are actually closely related. And both are equally effective in diluting our religious feeling, in regarding Torah as "out-of-style", in maintaining a distance between ourselves and G-d, and in helping us convert religion and religious devotion into a sort of competition to see who is most fashionable in a strictly social way.

From this pulpit we have condemned both these tendencies. We have done so a number of times, and will, with the help of G-d, continue to do so many more

times. We must be awakened to the fact that society is not religion, that the average is far below the best, and that to be religious you have to have more spine, more courage and more bravery than it takes to make a war hero.

Perhaps I can best illustrate this insistence upon preaching against what we have called the "cult of mediocrity" and the pressure to conform, by relating to you a brilliant Chassidic comment on an old Midrash. Our Sages related, in a Midrash, a beautiful allegorical story concerning Man's creation. When G-d took counsel with His heavenly hosts concerning the creation of man, Naasu Malachei Hashareis Kitos Kitos, opinion amongst the angels was sharply divided as to whether Man deserved to be created or not. Emes Amar Al Yibarei, Truth came before the Divine Throne and argued against the creation. Mankind would not keep Truth, and therefore should not be willed into existence. Shalom Amar Al Yibarei, Peace also argued against man, since he would constantly be involved in war and controversy. But Tzedek Amar Yibarei, Justice maintained that he should be created, since it is just that he first be given a chance to prove himself.

It was, then, two to one against Man. What did G-d do? He threw Emes, Truth, down to earth and out of Heaven. Therefore there remained a tie, Peace against Justice, and here G-d Almighty Himself entered the debate, and cast the deciding vote, breaking the tie in favor of man. And thus was Man created. A beautiful story, filled with meaning for those who can discern it. But there is one difficulty in it. And the question is, why did G-d dispose of Emes, who counselled against the creation, why did He not cast away Shalom, who similarly argued against man? And the great R. Alexander Moshe Ibn Lapidus answered, "because had Truth remained and argued its point, it would have prevailed under any circumstances. For truth outlives and outweighs any majority."

To that end, primarily, will the preaching of this pulpit be dedicated. Truth, and not majority. Truth, and not conformity. Truth, and not mediocrity. *Noach Ish Tzaddik Tamim Hayah Bidorotav*, Noah was righteous in his generations. That is the true test of character - if one can remain righteous even in such a vicious and corrupt generation, if one can defy the majorities and the pressure to conform to them and remain a Noah. We must rekindle the passion for Truth that lies dormant in the Jewish breast.

The third function of the pulpit, to reach, is by far the most difficult. It is to reach into people's souls, and there

so to move and stir them, that they reach upwards to G-d Himself. It means to inspire. It means to uplift. When the pulpit has achieved a measure of “to teach” and “to preach”, it may be ready “to reach.” But this too is not a one-way affair. Inspiration is not an impromptu gift from heaven. It needs preparation and study on the part of him who is to be inspired. A congregation must be ready to receive inspiration. Nay, even more, a congregation must inspire its Rabbi, if the Rabbi is to inspire it.

I think that Prof. Heschel has a point when he maintains, in his very latest book (*Man's Quest for G-d*, p.80) that “the test of a true sermon is that it can be converted to prayer”. Assuredly so! Not the kind of smooth, dignified, expedient prayer we sometimes witness in some of our modern temples, where a Cantor and Rabbi chant, and that is regarded as if the congregation has prayed. No, certainly not that. But rather, prayer in its most intense, and hence most Jewish form. Prayer in which one’s whole being is on

fire, in which all our pettiness is consumed in the grandeur of G-d of whom we first become conscious.

The ultimate goal of the pulpit must be so to reach into the cores of the congregants as to convert them into prayers, to make them feel as David did when he said *Ani Tefillah*, “I am prayer”, to the point where the entire personality is wrapped up in an awareness of the greatness of G-d, in Whose shadow we live all our lives, but of whom we become aware in only our greatest moments. The pulpit must beware and not allow dignity to obscure depth, efficiency to eclipse inwardness, courtesy to overshadow the inner fire and decorum to prevent the inner torrent of tears and heartbeats and the blessing of wonder and reverence.

The pulpit must ever remind us, by reaching into us, that our synagogues have too much administration and too little worship, and that we have too much expediency and too little fire.

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## The Right Kind of Praise

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

**A**mazing job!” “Incredible accomplishment!” “Awesome performance!” Praise is an essential element of healthy relationships, whether at home, in school, or at work. Yet, there is a dark-side to praise when it is done inappropriately. Dr. Eddie Brummelman notes that parents often deliver inflated praise to their children, thinking that it will boost their self-esteem. Yet, his research demonstrates that inflated praise can backfire in one of two ways. If a child has low self-esteem, inflated praise may actually lead the child to have even lower self-esteem (“if you think this is so amazing, you obviously don’t have such high expectations of me...”). Alternatively, in some children, embellished praise can lead to narcissistic tendencies. Praise is essential, but it is essential for praise to be tempered, not extravagant.

We know that Noah was righteous. That much the verse tells us explicitly (*Bereishit* 6:9). What we aren’t so sure about is how righteous he was, especially when compared to other righteous individuals. The verse says that Noah was righteous in his generation. The Talmud quotes a debate as to how to understand the nuance of this statement (*Sanhedrin* 108b). Rabbi Yochanan says that only compared to his own degenerate generation was he righteous, but if he lived in a different generation, he would

not be considered righteous. In contrast, Reish Lakish argues that the fact that he was able to stay righteous despite his generation’s foibles, proves that he obviously would have been righteous if those around him were virtuous.

While this debate itself is fascinating on its own, there is a powerful message embedded within Rashi’s comments. A close read of Rashi’s gloss reveals two major differences between the Talmudic presentation and his formulation. First, while the Talmud quotes Rabbi Yochanan’s negative opinion first, Rashi quotes the more positive opinion of Reish Lakish first, perhaps alluding to the importance of prioritizing praise over critique. Second, Rashi doesn’t quote the opinions by name. He writes that “some of our Sages explain it to his credit” and “others explain it to his discredit.” Notice how in explaining the praise he attributes the opinion to the Sages, while the negative opinion he just attributes to “others,” without any mention to their stature as a Sage or Rabbi. Dr. Ari Ciment quotes Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro as suggesting that while sometimes being critical has its place, providing a positive spin and offering praise is the approach that is worthy of being stamped with a moniker of Sage (*Pirkei Dr. Ari*, p. 13).

When describing Noah’s characteristics in the above-cited verse, it is written that Noah was righteous and

“tamim.” Commentators and translators differ on the exact meaning of the word “tamim,” with explanations covering wide variety of attributes: flawless, perfect, humble, beloved, simple, whole, intelligent, virtuous, authentic, and pious (see *Otzar Mefarshei HaTorah*, p. 208). When G-d subsequently speaks to Noah directly, He tells him to go into the ark, “for you alone have I found righteous before Me in this generation” (*Bereishit* 7:1). Here, Noah is only referred to as righteous, without the second appellation of being tamim. Picking up on this subtlety, Rashi, quoting the Talmud (*Eiruvin* 18b), concludes that “only a part of a man’s good qualities should be enumerated in his presence.”

## The Single Father of Humanity, Twice

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Much ink has been spilled in the attempt to understand the stories of *Bereishit*, especially the first two parshiyot, in light of modern knowledge of science and history. Some have opted in favor of literal understandings of the Torah and rejection of outside data; others, with varying levels of success, have read the Torah more metaphorically in ways that can align with what has been learned from these secular disciplines. Still others, however, have argued that both approaches are ill advised. In Shemuel David Luzzato (“Shadal”)’s opening comments to *Bereishit*, for example, he argues that all of these readings understand the Torah as a historical or scientific work, when in fact it is a moral-theological one. The narrative style allows these ideas to speak to all audiences, whether or not they are philosophically inclined. They are not, however, meant to offer scientific information.

What lessons do these opening stories teach? Shadal contends that the creation stories teach that 1) The world is an integrated whole created by one G-d and 2) Humanity is unified by a common ancestor. Much of the barbarism in the ancient world emerged from misunderstandings of these principles. Belief in a pantheon of petty, warring gods led people to believe that it was morally justifiable or mandated to engage in horrendous acts to appease the gods in their endless contests with each other. The belief that humanity descended from different ancestors allowed the dehumanization of the “other”. In his comments he essentially elaborates on Chazal’s claim that humanity all descended from Adam so that no one could tell another person that “my father is greater than your

Commenting on this statement, Rabbi Akiva Adler emphasizes the importance of praise within education. Parents and teachers should make a habit of praising their children and students often (*Ikvei Eliyahu*, p. 15). Yet, the praise should not be overly lavish and extravagant. It may be true that Noah was both righteous and tamim, but when praising him directly, G-d only mentioned his righteousness. Embellished and inflated praise, even if warranted, can backfire. Praise is essential, but it is essential to strike the proper balance between healthy praise and the destructiveness of inflated praise.

father.” (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:5)

The detailed genealogies of *Bereishit* Chapter 10, listing the children born after the flood to the children of Noach, double down on these messages, even in the less than ideal post-flood world. “We know that many of the ancients said that their forefathers were born from their lands though a miraculous act of one god or another, or that they were born of the gods themselves. The intent of the Torah is to contradict these vanities, and to establish the straight belief that we are all the children of one man and we are all the work of one G-d.” (Shadal, *Bereishit* 10:1) The theological and moral lessons merge - there is one G-d, who created all humanity through one person (Adam, and later Noach), so that people would understand that they are all equal.

Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman (*Bereishit* 10:1) develops this further: Considering that the majority of the ancient nations were interested in their nation and birth alone, and to other nations and their countries they paid no attention, as they saw them as strangers or even as barbarians. The point of departure for the Torah of G-d is that all people are brothers, children of one large family, and all of them are destined to be part of the blessing that was given to Avraham, our father, in the beginning: “And through you all families of the earth will be blessed,” “And through your children all nations of the earth will be blessed,” and afterwards to Yaakov, “And through you all families of the land will be blessed, and through your children.” Therefore, before the crux of the genealogies of Israel, which start with Avraham, comes a chart of the nations, to give those families of the earth and nations of the land names, so that

the day will come when the Jewish people will bring them to the understanding of the true G-d.

Even after humanity's failure, the Torah insists that all people remain part of the religious story of the world. This must be reiterated before Avraham is introduced, to teach

that G-d chose Avraham not to reject others, but to inspire them. Each nation continues to be named; their individual identities still matter. Rather than write that in succinct statements, the Torah showed us this, by including them in the ultimate story of the Book of Books.

## The First “Flawed” Zionist

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

**P**arshat Noach describes the Divine reboot of creation. Witnessing the complete moral meltdown of humanity G-d decides to regenerate the entire world. A new world is launched through Noach whose progeny begin to repopulate the freshly formed planet.

In the second part of the parsha we witness Noach's three children repopulating the human race and rapidly inhabiting the entire globe. Despite humanity's attempt at “population concentration”, the human race is dispersed across the four corners of the planet. Without question the final chapters of Noach are characterized by expansion – both population growth and geographical sprawl. Yet, despite all this growth and expansion, the parsha concludes with a targeted journey to a very specific country in which the Divine presence is more acutely palpable.

Conventionally, the first emigration to Israel is associated with Avram- the first believer in one Divine being. Avram had defied an entire pagan which still imagined that G-d could be associated with physical images and molten idols.

Additionally, he believed so deeply in a G-d he couldn't 'see' that he was willing to die a fiery death on behalf of these principles. Ultimately, Avram is rescued from the furnace and is Divinely summoned to settle in the land of a G-d which Avram alone had discovered. The first pilgrimage to Israel is the outcome of a life of religious courage and commitment!! Or so we are led to believe... Surprisingly, the journey to Israel is not launched by Avram himself but rather by his father Terach who assembles his entire entourage (including his son Avram) and commences a journey to the land of Kena'an. Arriving in the city of Charan he deceases and ultimately his voyage is completed by Avram who receives a direct Divine command to complete his father Terach's journey. Terach, not Avram, is the first person to be drawn to the land of Israel!

Terach is an odd personality to be fascinated by the land of Israel. Each year, at the Pesach seder, we cite the verse

in Yehoshua (24:2) which depicts our ancestor Terach, as an idol worshipper. In fact, Chazal portray him as a pagan priest or at the very least a sculptor of pagan deities. Avram was a revolutionary who bravely disregarded his father's traditions. Terach couldn't be further from discovering Hashem and yet he feels lured to this special land of G-d!

The startling expedition of Terach is a template for the often winding road of Jewish history. At the dawn of our nationhood, Hashem creates an attraction to the land of Israel which can exist even in a vacuum of theological belief or in the absence of ritual or mitzvah performance. Terach has absolutely no interest in discovering Hashem nor does ritual attract him. Yet, despite these deficiencies, he is drawn unwittingly to the land of Israel. This Divine plan insures that future Terach-like personalities will still be incorporated within Jewish experience. In His infinite wisdom, foreseeing that at various stages of history Jews would wander from religion and ritual, Hashem forged a mechanism to include all Jews within one national destiny. He fashioned the ability for a Jew to relate to his own country, people and sense of nationhood independent of classic religious experience. Terach and his pilgrimage establish a model for Jewish history. Throughout history, Jews have always heard the whisper of Terach even if they were deaf to the echo of Sinai.

This Divine plan is reiterated in the second “tochacha” in Parshat Bechukotai which concludes with the eventual retrieval of Jews from exile: “I will remember the merits of Yaakov and those of Yitzchak and I will also remember the merits of Avraham....(Vayikra 26:42). Indeed, Jews who adhere to the lifestyles of the Avot are recovered from exile based on their ancestor's merits. What about Jews who deviate from their ancestral routines and abdicate a classically religious lifestyle? How will they be redeemed? The verse concludes “V'ha'aretz ezkor (I will recall their land)”. Hashem promises to recall the “merits of the Land” or the merits of those devoted to the land. By implication,

devotion to land is acknowledged even in the absence of dedication to the lives of Avot. Ideally, a Jew should both deeply identify with our Avot as well as dedicate entirely dedicate his life on behalf of our land and people. This blend represents a comprehensive religious consciousness. However, for those who no longer identify with the lives of our Avot, the Covenant of the land exists independently and assures redemption. The precedent of Terach's journey is invoked as Hashem in Parshat Bechukotai as Hashem promises redemption for all Jews.

We are currently witnessing the implementation of this Divine plan- a historical phenomenon which only He could foster. Unfortunately, we live in a world in which vast numbers of Jews are no longer captivated by classic religion or the demands of ritual. This is unfortunate and we await an era in which all hearts will veer back to Hashem. Yet, through their commitment to land, people and nationhood, millions of Jews are still engaged and involved in our common destiny. Religious Jews who reside in Israel are typically driven by an overarching sense of Divine prophecy. Despite the hardships of life in Israel, religious prophecy reinforces their resolve and bolsters their commitment to the hardships of life in Israel.

## **Lessons from the Rainbow**

*Mrs. Michal Horowitz*

**I**n this week's parsha, Parshas Noach, as a result of the sinful ways of mankind, Hashem destroys the whole world in the Deluge, saving only Noach, his wife Naama (Rashi to Gen.4:22), their three sons Shem, Cham and Yafes, and the wives of their sons.

In the aftermath of the flood, G-d introduces the sign of His covenant that He will never entirely destroy the world again: אֶת-קְשׁוֹן, נָתַתִּי בְּעֵנָן; וְיִתֵּה לְאֹות בְּרִית, בֵּין בְּינֵינוּ וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ - My bow I have placed in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth; וְיִהִי, בְּעֵנִי עַנְנָן עַל-הָאָרֶץ, וְיִהִי, בְּעֵנֶךָ תְּהַקֵּשָׁת, בְּעֵנָן, and it will be, when I cloud a cloud upon the earth, and the bow is seen in the cloud; זָכָרְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי, וּבְיָדֶךָ תְּהַזֵּבְנָן, וְבֵין כָּל-גָּפֶשׁ חַיָּה, בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר וּלְאַ-יְהִי עוֹד הַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין כָּל-גָּפֶשׁ חַיָּה, בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר וּלְאַ-יְהִי עוֹד הַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין כָּל-גָּפֶשׁ חַיָּה, בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר וּלְאַ-יְהִי עוֹד הַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, and I will remember My covenant that is between Me and between you, and between every living creature of all flesh, and the waters will be no more as a flood to destroy all flesh (Bereishis 9:13-15).

Rashi teaches: **כַּשְׁתַּעֲלֵה בָּמַחְשָׁבָה לִפְנֵי לְהַבִּיא חֹשֶׁךְ**  
בענני ענן. **כַּשְׁתַּעֲלֵה בָּמַחְשָׁבָה לִפְנֵי לְהַבִּיא חֹשֶׁךְ**  
**וְאַבְדֹּן לְעוֹלָם**, When I cloud a cloud upon the earth - When I

The dedication of secular Israelis to our country is more astonishing. Without a comprehensive life of ritual and commandment, a secular Jew's devotion to our country is harder to grasp. Where does their commitment and love for our land and people stem from? Evidently, the ancient call of this country and her people continues to penetrate the hearts of Jews – even those who are distant from the world of belief and ritual. If this land can enchant an idolater like Terach, it can definitely enchant Jews who may have wavered from ritual fidelity but certainly aren't as remote as Terach the pagan-master.

The enchanting sway of the land of Israel isn't limited to Jews who physically reside in the land. Unfortunately, our people are scattered across the world and deeply splintered into various groupings and denominations. Perhaps the only common and unifying force is our joint commitment to our land and our peoplehood in that land. Jews from all denominations rally around one value- our precious land and the heart of a nation which pulses with love and devotion for that land. Terach blazed a trail which Jews have followed for millennia. The land entralls even Jews whose hearts have turned from classic religion!

*have in mind to bring darkness and destruction to the world [I will see the bow and remember My oath].*

When Hashem sees the rainbow, keviyachol, He is reminded of His promise and will never destroy all of mankind and all living beings in a deluge again. While the rainbow is a beautifully, breathtaking natural wonder, it is actually a sign that though the generation is sinful, Hashem has promised that He will never again flood the entire world.

There are many natural phenomena that could have been chosen as a manifestation of Hashem's promise. What is the significance of the rainbow that it was chosen as a sign of G-d's bris to never destroy the world again? Moreover, what is the lesson to us, to mankind, in the diverse colors of the rainbow?

R' Shalom Rosner, quoting R' Avraham Rivlin, writes, "One of the unique and beautiful aspects of a rainbow is its spectrum of colors. What do all the different colors of the rainbow symbolize?

"It stands as a lesson to all mankind about the sin of

the generation of the mabul (deluge). In that generation, everyone lived for themselves, without considering others or including themselves in the collective. The Torah tells us that the world was filled with theft, fraud, and injustice. People cared for themselves and lacked concern and compassion for other people and their property.

"The rainbow symbolizes unity. What a beautiful sight when all the colors come together and form a rainbow. What a beautiful world it would be if people of different persuasions, of different hashkafot, would respect each other and come together. If we do not want to be deserving of another mabul, then we have to be a united people. Each person can be an individual, but that individual has to be within the spectrum. The rainbow symbolizes diversity within unity" (Shalom Rav, p.31-32).

As we read Parshas Noach this coming Shabbos, it behooves us all to remember the lesson of the rainbow... In a world where so many rise up against us to slander, defame, debase and destroy us, we have no one but each other. If only we could face the world with unity amongst ourselves, respect each other and come together, perhaps we too will merit a bow of (proverbial) light in a world of darkness.

The holy Baal Shem Tov zt'l (1698-1760) taught that there is no Jew who does not have some good quality, some spark of holiness. Two times in the Torah we find the command "to love". "Love Hashem, your G-d" (Deut.6:5), and "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Lev.19:18). This comes to teach us that our love for Jews must equal our love for G-d. We must love G-d, despite the fact that at times He seems to act against us... And so, we must love every Jew - even if we decry his actions (Tales of the Righteous, p.70).

In regard to the lesson of the rainbow, R' Rosner further

writes, "R' Meir Shapiro asks: It took Noach several hundred years to build the ark, so how is it that he was unable to influence even one individual? Apparently, Noach's heart was not in the task. He gave up on the people of his generation" (Shalom Rav, p.32).

Had Noach really believed in the capacity and ability of the people of his time to change, he would have managed to at least influence some of them! According to this interpretation, the failing then was not in the people, but in Noach himself. From here we derive a most important life lesson.

Concludes R' Rosner, "When a teacher or rebbe does not have faith in his students, they will certainly not succeed. The rainbow is a bright burst of color on an otherwise dreary, rainy day. It is symbolic of not giving up on others no matter how dark the situation may seem. If we keep trying, we might be able to suddenly see our influence on our students and witness them beginning to shine. We need to believe in them and encourage them to expose their true colors" (Shalom Rav, p.32-22).

The great chassidic master, R' Yisrael of Ruzhin (1796-1850, Ukraine), used to say, "One must never despair of a Jew. Every Jew, even a wicked one, maintains some small link with Judaism. When a bucket falls into a deep well, it is possible to pull it up from the bottom, as long as it is connected to a rope. It could be a thick rope or a very thin rope, as long as there is a rope" (Tales of the Righteous, p.210).

We must unite together, one nation under G-d, even if we may disagree with each other; and we must remember that every Jew is just that: a Jew, ultimately always connected to the RS"O, in whom (and in Whom) we must never lose faith.

## The Hidden Message of the Olive Branch

Rabbi Elly Krimsky

**T**he international symbol for peace is the olive branch. A dove too is identified with amity and congruence. Where does this idea find its source? This bird and olive branch are first referenced in Parshas Noach:

*"Then he sent out the dove to see whether the waters had decreased from the surface of the ground. But the dove could not find a resting place for its foot, and returned to him to the ark, for there was water over all the earth. So putting out his hand, he took it into the ark with him. He waited another*

*seven days, and again sent out the dove from the ark. The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the waters had decreased on the earth. He waited still another seven days and sent the dove forth; and it did not return to him anymore. In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the waters began to dry from the earth; and when Noah removed the covering of the ark, he saw that the surface of the ground was drying'* (Bereshis 8:7-13).

In this entire narrative, every word is critical to our understanding, but a phrase stuck out to me as wholly extraneous. When the dove returned with the olive branch, which let Noach know that the waters were subsiding, the Torah tells us when the dove returned: "toward evening." Why do we need to know that? Does it really matter? The Torah itself alludes to the fact that the distinctions between day and night got blurred during the deluge (see Rashi to Bereshis 8:22, based upon the Midash Bereshis Rabbah 34:11). So what do we learn from these seemingly extraneous words?

The K'li Yakar asks this question and answers citing an opinion of the Chizkuni regarding the "tzohar" that provided light to the ark (see Bereshis 6:16). Rashi offers two opinions what this mysterious "tzohar" was. Some believe it was a window and others believe it was a precious gem that emitted light. Chizkuni combines the two views. He claims that indeed the "tzohar" was a window, the same window through which Noach dispatched the raven and the dove (see Bereshis 8:6). During the day, suggests Chizkuni, when the window was closed, a gem was placed before it. However, Chizkuni believes the pshat (most simple) explanation of the verse is that the tzohar, which produced light for the ark, was neither a window nor a gem. He believed it was olive oil, *yitzhar* in Hebrew, which shares a common root with the word tzohar. Chizkuni concludes that since the heavenly bodies (mazalos) did not function during the period of the flood, artificial light, i.e. kindling with oil, would have been necessary. Kli Yakar finds Midrashic support for Chizkuni's commentary. Kli Yakar's comments parallel those views (i.e. Drash v'Iyun) that Noah's ark was a mini Tabernacle. Clearly the kindling of a lamp would foreshadow the lighting of the Menorah, which can also serve as a prequel for Chanukah.

According to this opinion, the message of the olive branch is quite different. The dove brought to Noach an item that was needed. The olive branch showed Noach that he could exit the cocoon of the ark and provide light and warmth for his family.

Perhaps the Kli Yakar's mention of the Menorah in the Tabernacle and the Hasmonean victory over the Selucid Greeks -the miracle of Chanukah - teaches us an additional lesson. Both the Temple which housed the beautiful Menorah, and the Hasmonean dynasty, did not last forever. Their downfalls are recounted in our history; their destinies were lost due to sin.

Noach had to start over. Unfortunately, the only post-

diluvian narrative the Torah provides about Noach is quite negative. Adam and Chava already sinned in the Garden of Eden, a mere hours after they were created (based on the Midrash). God destroyed the world due to sin in the days of Noach. The end of the parshah describes man's attempt to rebel against God and build a tower to attack Him in heaven, *rachmana litzlan* (see Rashi to Bereshis 10:1). The world descended into idolatry, with Avraham and his family of protagonists the exception.

Maybe the message of the olive branch viewed from the view of Chizkuni and Kli Yakar is that humankind is mortal and flawed, but that nonetheless does not exempt anyone from trying and living a life of *temimus*, a life of perfect congress with the Almighty. This view may even sync with Rashi's interpretation of the meaning of the olive branch: that it is a bitter pill to swallow.

I can't believe that we are approaching the 24th anniversary of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin. Those were dark days. About two years prior, he stood on the lawn of the White House and President Bill Clinton prodded him to shake hands with the embodiment of evil, Yasser Arafat. The look on Rabin's face when he shook Arafat's hand will never leave me. It looked like a man swallowing the bitterest of pills but he knew he had to do it (I'm not weighing in on the value or not of the Oslo Accords). That was the peace of the olive branch. That is Rashi's view.

Chizkuni/Kli Yakar's interpretation, allow us to see the olive branch either as an unflawed ideal (providing fuel for light and heat) or a temporary solution that does not last. Good things cannot last on their own. Humans need to make them work by toiling to maintain them. No peace lasts without maintenance and work on both sides; no marriage or any type of partnership can soar without both sides working to preserve the ideal level. Professionals need to constantly continue learning and reviewing even the most rudimentary of skills and exercises.

The olive oil associated with the Bais Hamikdash (Holy Temple) and that of the Maccabees could have lasted if people would have kept in mind and preserved the basic values associated with their greatness.

Let's approach life, and the normal-ness and basic-ness of the month of Cheshvan with this attitude. We have the tools and knowledge we need to succeed, but one of those tools is the drive to maintain those tools and that knowledge. Without that, the tools become rusty and unusable.