

Parshat Noach
A World Recreated – Filling the Void

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After the Flood, Noach, his wife and his children and their wives exit the Ark to enter a newly created world. This conception differs from the creation of Breishit in that it is *ex materia* (out of existing material *יש מיש*) as opposed to in Breishit where it is *ex nihilo* (out of nothing *יש מאין*). This is reinforced by the fact that Noach and his family, who emerge as the progenitors of mankind in the post Mabul world,¹ form a chain of continuity to humanity that existed in the pre Flood world. That is as opposed to Adam, the father of humankind, who is created by God and has no human predecessor. Does that difference in the nature of the creations bespeak a more fundamental distinction between the two worlds or is the new world into which Noach emerges identical to the world inhabited by Adam, just with a fresh start?

Upon Noach's exit from the Ark, he builds an altar and offers sacrifices to God.² God responds positively to Noach's overture and says to Himself (*וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים*),³ **"I will no longer curse the earth because of man**, since the devisings of man are evil from his youth; **nor will I ever again destroy every living being**, as I have done. So long as the earth endures, **seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.**"⁴ This stands in stark contrast to God's sentiment before the Flood, "God saw how great man's wickedness was on earth, and how every plan he devised was continually evil. And God regretted that He had made man on earth, and in His heart He was saddened (*וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים לִבּוֹ*),⁵ God said, 'I will blot out man, who I created, from the face of the earth – man together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them."⁶ This monologue describing God's intent to destroy the world concludes with, "But Noach found favor in the eyes of God (*וַיִּחַד נֹחַ בְּעֵינֵי יְקֹוֹק*)." The contrast between these two reactions

helps to underscore that there are three key elements to God's response to Noach's initiation of sacrifices upon exiting the Ark.

Noach's offerings highlight the capacity of man to do good and to realize their elevated Godly side. Without delving into the nuances and the theological underpinnings, in this new world, God now views man's evil inclination as a perpetual challenge to his success. God accepts the fact that the evil that man perpetuates is not necessarily because he is traitorous, but because he is unable to successfully ennoble his Godliness. He is unfortunately captured by his hedonistic desires and succumbs to his primal animalistic nature. With patience, God believes man, with hard work, can reach his potential and overcome these innate challenges. God's patience and mercy that was manifest in a limited fashion in the pre Mabul world,⁷ now becomes the central tenet by which God conducts this new world. This new way of administering the world has major ramifications.

The first of which is that **God commits to never again destroy the entire world because of man** (*וְלֹא-אֶסְפֹּד עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי*).⁸ On a rare occasion, if man or a society deteriorates to a state of complete evil, akin to humankind before the Flood, God will rain down upon them utter destruction (i.e. S'dom and Amora). The devastation wrought by the Flood was as the Ramban points out directed by Elokim (אלוקים), God's name representing nature and strict justice.⁹ Back then, evil resulting in destruction was still a central fabric of the world and a natural *quid pro quo*. God's conducting hand was still conspicuous, though not obvious. There might be delays in implementation, but in the end God's pleasure or displeasure were patently obvious because of the scale of the reaction. After the Mabul, patience is the overwhelming virtue by which God administers the world. In order for this to be the case, it is a *sine qua non* that God's presence be less overt in the world and therefore

1... וגם את נח באהבה זכרת. ותפקדהו בדבר ישועה ורחמים, בהביאך את מי המבול לשחת כל בשר מפני רוע מעליהם. על נן זכרונו בא לפניך יקוֹק אֱלֹהִים, להרבות זרעו כַּעֲפֹרֹת תֵּבַל וְצִפְצִפֵּי כָּחֹל הַיָּם. (מוסף ראש השנה, זכרונות)
2 וַיֵּצֵא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי-בָנָיו אִתּוֹ... וַיִּבְנוּ נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקַּח מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה וּמִכָּל הָעוֹף הַטְּהוֹר וַיַּעַל עֹלֹת בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ: (בראשית ח, יח-כ)
3 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל לִבּוֹ - לֹא גִלָּה הַדְּבַר לַנְּבִיאִים בְּזִמְנֵהוּ, רַק בְּיוֹם צוּתוֹ אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּכַתִּיבַת הַתּוֹרָה גִּלָּה אֵלָיו, כִּי כֹאשֶׁר הִקְרִיב נֹחַ קָרְבָּנוֹ עֲלֵה לִפְנֵי לַרְצוֹן, וְגַזַּר שְׁלֹא יוֹסִיף לַהֲכֹת אֶת כָּל חַי. וְכִּבְרַתְּבִיתִי בְּזֵה (לעיל ו' ו') סוּד רַמְזָה לְרַבּוּתוֹ ז"ל: (רמב"ן בראשית ח, כא) וְהֵאבֵן עֲזָרָה חוּלֵק עַל הַרְמָב"ן: אֵל לִבּוֹ כְּמוֹ עִם לִבּוֹ, אַחֲרַי כֵּן גִּילָה סוּדוֹ לִנְח כִּי נְבִיא הִיָּה. (אבן עזרא בראשית ח, כא) וְגַם הַסְּפֹרוֹת חֲלֻקִית: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל לִבּוֹ. שְׁלֹא גִלָּה לִנְח וּלְבָנָיו עַד שֶׁקִּבְּלוּ מִצוּתָיו וְהִקִּים בְּרִית: (ספורנו בראשית ח, כא)
4 וַיִּרַח יְקֹוֹק אֶת-רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים לִבּוֹ לֹא-אֶסְפֹּד עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעֵבֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יַעַר לִב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְּעֻרָיו וְלֹא-אֶסְפֹּד עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי: עַד כָּל-יְמֵי הָאָרֶץ זֶרַע וְקָצִיר וְקֹר וְחֹם וְקֵץ וְחֹרֵף וְיוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשָּׁבֵת: (בראשית ח, כא-כב)

5 וינחם ה'. ויתעצב אל לבו - דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם. והענין, כי מרו ועצבו את רוח קדשו בפשעיהם. וענין "אל לבו", כי לא הגיד זה לנביא שלוח אליהם, וכן הלשון במחושב, כדרך לדבר אל לבי (להלן כד מה), וזולתו: (רמב"ן בראשית ו, ו)
6 וַיִּרַח יְקֹוֹק כִּי רָחַק רֵעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יָצָר מִחֲשֵׁבֶת לִבּוֹ רַק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנְחֵם יְקֹוֹק כִּי-עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֵל-לִבּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק אִמְחָה אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה עַד-רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם: (בראשית ו, ז)
7 וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק לֹא-יִדּוֹן רִחְמֵי בְּאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשֶׁגֶם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיָה יָמָיו מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: (בראשית ו, ג)
8 וַיִּרַח יְקֹוֹק אֶת-רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים לִבּוֹ לֹא-אֶסְפֹּד עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעֵבֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יַעַר לִב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְּעֻרָיו וְלֹא-אֶסְפֹּד עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי: (בראשית ח, כא)
9 ...והסתכל כי בכל ענין המבול הזכיר "אלקים", ובכל ענין הפלגה הזכיר השם המיוחד, כי המבול בעבור השחתת הארץ, הפלגה בעבור שקצצו בניטעות, והנם עושים בשמו הגדול, וזה טעם הירידה, וכן במדת סדום. והמשכיל יבין: (רמב"ן בראשית יא, ב) וְגַם הַשֵּׁם הִיָּה גַם מוֹפִיעַ לְגַבִּי מַחִיית הָאָדָם וְהַהֲצֵלָה בְּזִמְנֵהוּ אֲבָל לֹא לְגַבִּי הַמְּבֹל עֲצָמוֹ ע"פ זֶה נִרְאָה שֶׁהַרְמָב"ן סוֹבֵר שֶׁשֵּׁם אֱלֹקִים הוּא הַשֵּׁם הַשֵּׁיִיךְ לַמְּבֹל

evil will no longer be met with wholesale destruction or an undeniable response from God.

This results in God's second declaration that **the natural order of the world will no longer be suspended** עד כְּלִי-יָמֵי הָאָרֶץ זָרַע וְקָצִיר וְקָרָר וְחָם וְיָקִיץ (יְהוָה וְיָוִם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ).¹⁰ God's manifestation in the world will no longer be so apparent. Chazal point out that God's commitment to not to interfere with the essential nature of the world (seasons, day and night) implies that it was not the case during the Mabul. During the flood, God's strict justice (sin/evil=destruction) superseded the natural order and caused its suspension which made God's will and presence palpable through the perceptible negative feedback to wrongdoing. After the Mabul, in order to facilitate this more covert presence of God, God's name of Elokim needs to be relegated to a role supporting this new order of patience. That means instead of producing *quid pro quo* destruction or reactions to evil, where God can be felt tangibly, it will form a system of uncompromising principles that become known as nature. With proper perspective, one who contemplates the greatness of nature will "see" God, but its perpetual consistency will make God's interaction with the world far less apparent. In this new world, God will selectively make his presence known by discriminately interfering with nature. That is why the destruction of S'dom and the dissemination of the Dor HaPilaga were carried out by the Tetragrammaton name of God (יְהוָה),⁹ the name that represents mercy or the supernatural. Maintaining patience and being merciful (יְקוּק) means that the status quo or the natural course, whether good or bad, will persist for longer than would be expected in order to not make God's hand in changing course obvious. A good example of this is the economic and political prosperity experienced during the reign of the evil king of Yehuda, Menashe, which was a remnant of the great Teshuva movement undertaken by his father Chizkiya. Similarly, in the opposite direction, the deteriorating political and economic situation sustained during the rule of Yoshiyahu, which was bequeathed to him because of the evil ways of his father and grandfather (Amon and Menashe), was despite his leading an incredible national religious revival.

¹⁰ עד כְּלִי-יָמֵי הָאָרֶץ זָרַע וְקָצִיר וְקָרָר וְחָם וְיָקִיץ וְיָוִם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ: (בראשית ח, כב) וְלֹא-אֲדָם אָמַר כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתֶּךָ וְתֹאכַל מִן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ בְּעִצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדַּר תַּצְמִיחַ לָךְ וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה: בְּזַעַת אִפְּיֶךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבֵבְךָ אֶל-הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ לֶקַחְתָּ כִּי-עָפַר אֶתָּה וְאֶל-עָפָר תִּשׁוּבוּ: (בראשית ג, יז-ט)

¹² טעם לא אוסיף עוד לקלל כאשר קללה ע"י אדם כי כן כתוב ארוהה האדמה (ברא' ג, יז). (אבן עזרא בראשית ח, כא) ׁ אכל יש מסבירים אחרת: בעבור האדם - כי יסופו הרעים בבני אדם ותעמוד האדמה לטובים ואם תשחת קצת האדמה עם הרעים כמו ארץ סדום ששחתה עם אנשיה, אין בה השחתת אדמה אם מעט מן האדמה תשחת כמו ערי הככר, ויחשבו כמו מקומות הנשקעים הם ואנשיהם: (רד"ק בראשית ח, כא)

The third thing God declares is that **the land will no longer be subject to the curse placed upon it** (לֹא-אֲסֹף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּר הָאָדָם)⁸ because of the sin of Adam.¹¹ Earth will return to its once productive state¹² and God will no longer tie the land's destiny or productivity to man's conduct.¹³

Interestingly, of God's three declarations, He only shares one of them with Noach. His pledge not to destroy the world again in the Covenant of the Rainbow.¹⁴ Reading between the lines, one might be able to also discern God's commitment not to disturb the natural order because a natural phenomenon (קשת) is utilized as the sign of the covenant and God's name of Elokim (אלקים) is used to describe God as a party to this unilateral resolution. Though that perception is only really possible in hindsight and would not be an obvious conclusion absent knowing God's pledge vis-à-vis nature. Given that, it would seem that the two commitments not disclosed to Noach are either not important for him to know or more likely that they are a perforce outcome of the Mabul that would be self-evident to him. If, as noted above, the Flood was a reset back to the original creation then the fact that the ground would return to its former state, prior to Adam's sin, would be axiomatic to a renewed and reset creation. Similarly, the fact that nature would return to its former course would be a natural result of the restoration of the original creation. In that case, Noach was just a new Adam attempting to do a better job than his predecessor.

On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that such a reset would precipitate an assurance that God would not destroy the world if it followed a similar path to that which had taken place prior to the Flood.¹⁵ Therefore, God must inform Noach (and the world) of this new development. As discussed above, that change in God's interaction with the world yields a number of other developments, most important of which is that God's presence and hand in the world would not be as pronounced. By "removing" Himself from the world, God was granting more latitude to man to determine his destiny and the direction of the world. On occasion, God would initiate corrective

¹³ וטעם בעבור האדם - כי בעבורו נענשו, ואם אדם לא חטא היו הם ניצולין אף על פי שהשחיתו גם הם דרכם: (רמב"ן בראשית ח, כא) ׁ ארץ ישראל היא היוצאת דופן בזה כמו שמעיד עליו הפסוק שהשגחת ה' בה תמיד (דברים יא, ייב) ועל פי דרך הקבלה היא מבחינת גן עדן שבתוכו החטא כן משפיע

¹⁴ וְהִקְמַתִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כְּלִי-בִשָּׂר עוֹד מִמִּי הַמְבֹרָא וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד מְבֹרָא לְשִׁפְחַת הָאָרֶץ: (בראשית ט, יא)

¹⁵ זה גם נכון לגבי ההצגה שלא לשוב ולקלל את האדמה או להשבית את הטבע בעתיד אבל נ"ל שהם כלולים בברית של ההנהגה החדשה שלא להשחית כל בשר שהוא תמידי וגם האיפוס של הבריאה הוא מצב שעששו ימשך תמיד

26. "לֹא יִכְפֹּר לְדָם אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַךְ-בָּהּ כִּי-אִם בְּדָם שִׁפְכוּ." This new Godly mantle assumed by man is best described by the Gemara in Shabbat, "...it comes coming to teach you that any judge who judges a true judgment truthfully, even if he sits in judgment for only one hour, the verse ascribes to him as if he became a partner to the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the act of Creation (אלא לומר לך כל דין שדן) - מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו נעשה שותף להקדוש ברוך הוא במעשה (בראשית)."²⁷

When Noach begins to sojourn on the land after the Flood, "he becomes a man of the earth and he plants a vineyard." While skipping many steps, the Torah relates that Noach eventually turned the fruit harvested from those vines into wine and he becomes inebriated from that which he consumes. In that state of intoxication, he is indecently exposed in his tent and his son Cham somehow wrongs him. His other two sons, out of respect for their father, cover up that which is inappropriately exposed. When Noach sobers from his drunken state, he realizes that which all his children had done and he curses and blesses them accordingly. It is interesting to contrast this story with that of Adam and Chava and their violation of God's demand to not eat from the Etz HaDa'at. Firstly, according to one opinion in the Gemara Berachot, the Etz HaDa'at was a grape vine which only serves to enhance the reasons for comparing these two stories.²⁸ Both narratives include parties who are exposed and who are later covered up. In addition, the stories include an infraction that is met with a punishment and being cursed. In the Garden of the Eden, Adam and Chava are naked and they sin by abrogating the word of God. They are then punished **by God cursing them and humankind and their nakedness is covered by God** providing them clothing. In Noach's story, Noach acts inappropriately which results in the revealing of his nakedness. He is "punished" by another **person**, his son Cham, behaving improperly. Noach is then **rescued from his nakedness by his other two sons**, Shem and Yefet. Cham is punished by **Noach cursing him and his descendants**. Once again here, in this new world, man is filling the roles that used to be occupied by God.

In the story of the Tower of Babel, God decides that their initiative is flawed (see Noach – What Toppled the Tower of Babel?) and that their plans need to be thwarted (נִזְהָה הַתְּלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת).²⁹ God intervenes subtly, but their undoing is then self-made (their inability to communicate) and no one present would attribute the demise of their plans to the intercession of God.³⁰ On the other hand, this is a very different outcome than that which happened to another culture that developed prior to the Flood (וַיְהִי כִּי-הִתְלַח הָאָדָם).³¹ There God also declares his displeasure with their behavior, but He deals with their misdeeds by destroying the whole world.

The world after the Mabul sees a downgrading of the relationship of God and man. God will no longer be actively and visibly involved in directing the world because man was unable to flourish under those conditions given his human frailty and propensity for hedonism. That seemingly sad state of affairs has a silver lining. The world cannot survive and thrive with a complete removal of God's overt presence and therefore in the absence of God's conspicuous presence and interaction, He needs proxies to act on his behalf. In the post Flood world, man is anointed with that role and task. The risk of course is if man fails to take that crown, the resultant depravity will be worse than the state of the world prior to the Mabul. On the other hand, if man rises to the occasion, there is hope for a better outcome. After the Flood, God attempts to offset man's animalistic tendencies by having him be a more active partner in the creation and destiny of the world. The elevating of man to wear this more Godly mantle and to accept more responsibility for the direction and success of the world empowers and encourages him to utilize his "image of God (צלם אלקים)" and by doing so conquer and master his unrestrained indulgences and desires that led to man's downfall prior to the Mabul. Although God is now more distant, this new partnership made in heaven ennobles and enables man's image to soar to Godliness.

Shabbat Shalom

²⁶ וְלֹא-תִתְנִיפוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲתֶם בָּהּ כִּי הִדָּם הוּא יִחַנֵּף אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא-יִכְפֹּר לְדָם אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַךְ-בָּהּ כִּי-אִם בְּדָם שִׁפְכוּ: (במדבר לה, לד)

²⁷ רב חסדא ורבה בר רב הונא הוו יתבי בדינא כולי יומא, הוה קא חליש לבייהו. תנא להו רב חייא בר רב מדפתי: יועמד העם על משה מן הבקר עד הערב, וכי תעלה על דעתך שמהו יושב וזן כל היום כלו? תורתו מתי נעשית? אלא לומר לך כל דין שדן דין אמת לאמיתו אפילו שעה אחת - מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו נעשה שותף להקדוש ברוך הוא במעשה בראשית. כתיב הכא ויעמד העם על משה מן הבקר עד הערב, וכתב התם ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד. (שבת י:)

²⁸ דתניא אילן שאכל ממנו אדם הראשון, רבי מאיר אומר: גפן היה, שאין לך דבר שמביא יללה על האדם אלא יין, שנאמר: וישת מן היין וישכר; רבי נחמיה אומר: תאנה היתה, שבדבר שנתקלקלו בו נתקנו, שנאמר ויתפרו עליה תאנה; רבי יהודה אומר: חטה היתה, שאין התינוק יודע לקרות אבא ואמא עד שיטעום טעם דגן. (ברכות מ.)

²⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הֵן עָם אֶחָד וְשִׁפְהָ אֶחָד לְכָל-נֹזֵחַ הַתְּלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא-יִבְצֵר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: (בראשית יא, ו)

³⁰ הִבֵּה גִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שִׁפְתֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שִׁפְת רֵעֵהוּ: (בראשית יא, ז)

³¹ וַיְהִי כִּי-הִתְלַח הָאָדָם לְרֵב עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּבְנוֹת יְלָדוּ לָהֶם: (בראשית יא, א)