

R' Gamliel HaKohen Rabinowitz-Rappaport *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Sha'ar Ha'shamayim in Yerushalayim) writes: The obvious connection between this week's *Parashah* and *Haftarah* is the verse in the latter (*Yeshayah* 54:9), "For like the waters of Noach shall this be to Me. As I have sworn never again to pass the waters of Noach over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you or rebuke you." On a deeper level, R' Rabinowitz notes that this week's *Haftarah* is also read during the Seven Weeks of Consolation following *Tisha B'Av*--half of it (*Yeshayah* 54:1-10) for *Parashat Re'eh* and half (54:11-55:5) for *Ki Tetze*. Just as these verses console us after we recall the destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash*, so they console us after we recall the destruction of the entire world in the Flood.

There is a practical lesson in this, writes R' Rabinowitz. If a person undergoes a tragedy or some suffering, he must not remain in a state of mourning. He must seek and accept consolation. Another lesson is that after parents or teachers punish a child or student as appropriate, they must offer the student words of consolation and encouragement as well. It is noteworthy, R' Rabinowitz adds, that *Hashem* taught the prophet *Yeshayah* these words of consolation over the destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash* 110 years or more before that destruction occurred. This teaches us how important it is to *Hashem* that we console those who have experienced suffering. (*Tiv Ha'haftarot*)

Bitachon

This year--a Shemittah / sabbatical year, when agricultural activities in Eretz Yisrael are restricted and certain loans must be forgiven by lenders--we will iy"H devote this space to discussing Bitachon / placing one's trust in Hashem.

We continue with another source discussing a connection between Shemittah and the trait of Bitachon.

We read (*Vayikra* 25:19-21): "The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill; you will dwell securely upon it. If you will say, 'What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and we will not gather in our crops!' [*Hashem* answers:] I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period [*i.e.*, the pre-*Shemittah*, *Shemittah*, and post-*Shemittah* years]."

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: Why must the Torah make this promise to those who observe the *Shemittah*? Will they not already have seen before the *Shemittah* begins that the produce of the sixth year (*i.e.*, the pre-*Shemittah* year) was threefold?

R' Elyashiv answers: The Torah is not anticipating that one will ask this question in the sixth year or the seventh year. Rather, it is man's nature to worry about the distant future; therefore, he will ask in the first year of the *Shemittah* cycle: "How can I comfortably eat my produce during the next six years? I must put something away for the *Shemittah* year!"

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“He sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning until the waters dried from upon the earth.” (8:7)

A *Midrash* relates that Noah said to the raven, “Of what use are you? You are not kosher to eat, nor fit for a *Korban* / sacrifice.” *Hashem* told Noah, “Take it into the Ark, for a time will come when it will be needed. There will be a *Tzaddik*, Eliyahu Ha’navi, who will bring a drought to the world. I will send him to live alone, and (*Melachim I* 17:6), “The ravens [will] bring him bread and meat in the morning. . .”

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman z”l Hy”d (see facing page) writes: This *Midrash* illustrates *Hashem’s* trait of tolerating, and even sustaining, a species or family for thousands of years--tens of thousands of beings, in all--simply because of some good that will come out of that species or family in the distant future. Why, in fact, was the “useless” raven used to sustain Eliyahu? To make clear that his sustenance came from *Hashem*.

(*Peninei Ha’shlaimut: Sha’ar Ha’savlanut* 1:10)

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Were a person to think this way, continues R’ Elyashiv, it would defeat the entire purpose of the *Shemittah* year, which is to inculcate *Bitachon* in the Creator of the world, and to implant in a person the *Emunah* / faith that there is no difference between the source of our sustenance for 40 years in the desert and the source of our sustenance in *Eretz Yisrael*--though one appears to be miraculous and the other, natural. Therefore, the Torah commands (verse 19): “The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill; you will dwell securely upon it.” You will not need to skimp out of worry for the future.

One might ask further, writes R’ Elyashiv: After a person sees G-d’s blessing during the first *Shemittah* cycle he experiences, why will he have doubts in later *Shemittah* cycles? The answer, writes R’ Elyashiv, is that the fulfillment of *Hashem’s* blessing is dependent on our expressing our *Bitachon* by eating our fill, as the verse says. If a person skimps during the first *Shemittah* cycle and waits to see if *Hashem’s* promise is fulfilled, it will not be fulfilled. As we read in *Tehilim* (121:5), “*Hashem* is your shadow.” To the extent that we express our *Bitachon* in *Hashem*, He validates our feelings of trust. If we do not demonstrate our trust, He responds accordingly.

R’ Elyashiv adds: [Nevertheless, one might argue that worrying about the future is a good trait. To those people, we ask:] Do you worry about your spiritual future to the same degree that you worry about your material future? Why do so many people not try to build their spiritual fortunes?

(*Mishnat Ha’grish: Shevi’it* 257)

“Now the earth had become corrupt before *Elokim*, and the earth had become filled with robbery.” (6:11)

We read (*Iyov* 4:20), “They are ground down from morning to evening; without *Meisim* / contemplation, they are lost forever.” Our Sages interpret this verse as a reference to the Generation of the Flood, with the word “*Meisim*” alluding to civil laws, as in the verse (*Shmot* 21:1), “And these are the civil laws that *Tasim* / you shall place before them.” In other words, the Generation of the Flood was condemned because it failed to enforce civil laws, *i.e.*, monetary laws that permit a society to function.

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman z”l Hy”d (*Menahel Ruchani* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) asks: Does not the Torah tell us why the Generation of the Flood was condemned--because “the earth had become filled with robbery”?

He explains: When *Bnei Yisrael* stood at Har Sinai, they were on the level of Adam before his sin. Every single Jew experienced prophecy when the Torah was given. As such, was it really necessary for *Hashem* to command *Bnei Yisrael* not to murder, steal, commit adultery, or desire someone else’s property? One answer, writes R’ Shulman, is that the Torah has a different definition of murder than a person would have on his own. For example, humiliating someone by giving him charity in public is considered by G-d to be equal to murder. Commandments of the Torah that seem obvious to us are meant to teach us to think in the Torah’s terms, not in our own terms or with our own biases.

Furthermore, continues R’ Shulman, a person can be a great observer of the positive commandments, yet be far from adequate when it comes to the negative commandments. There is an apocryphal story of a man who found a lost object, returned it to its owner, and then stole it. When he was asked why he bothered returning the item before stealing it, he replied, “Returning lost objects is a *Mitzvah*, and I am a good Jew! But, then I stole it, because that is how I earn a living.” In real life, there certainly are people who endow *Shuls* or *Yeshivot* with ill-gotten wealth, R’ Shulman writes.

Our Sages say that the robbery of which the Generation of the Flood was guilty involved repeatedly stealing very small amounts of money at a time. How does such behavior come about? The quoted verse in *Iyov* explains that it comes about from not paying proper attention to the fine details of monetary laws. In the eyes of the world, stealing pennies here and there may not be theft, but *Hashem* has different standards. This what *Tehilim* (147:18-19) refers to when it says: “He relates His words to Yaakov, His statutes and judgments to *Yisrael*. He did not do this for any other nation; such judgments--they know not.”

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