

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the *Mabul* / Flood, which started in *Marcheshvan*, the month that begins today. *Midrash Tanchuma* relates that, although *Hashem* swore that He would never bring another worldwide flood, heavy rains continued to fall every year on the days that corresponded to the 40 days of the *Mabul*--from the middle of *Marcheshvan* until late *Kislev*. This happened annually until the construction of the first *Bet Hamikdash* was completed thousands of years later, also in the month of *Marcheshvan*. The cessation of these rains is hinted to by the verse (*Melachim I* 6:38) stating that work on the Temple was completed in the month of "*Bul*"--the word "*Mabul*" without the letter "*Mem*," because the 40 days of rain ceased at that time. [The *Gematria* of "*Mem*" is 40.]

R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Lublin, Poland) explains: *Hashem* created the world so that He could reside in it. The Generation of the Flood refused to further that goal; instead, *Midrash Rabbah* records that they denied G-d's existence, saying, "There is no law and no Judge." But when the *Bet Hamikdash* was completed, there finally was a place in our world where the *Shechinah* could reside. [Of course, *Hashem* does not have a need to be revealed, nor does He need a physical place to reside. But for reasons unknown and unknowable to us, that is His Will.]

R' Tzaddok adds: The *Bet Hamikdash* was the place from which *Yir'ah* / reverence of G-d was disseminated to the world (see *Devarim* 14:23). For this reason, the special *Avodah* / Divine service of *Marcheshvan* is to increase one's *Yir'ah*. (*Pri Tzaddik: Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan* 1)

Shabbat

"They shall rejoice in Your kingship--*Shomrei Shabbat* / those who observe the Sabbath and call it a delight. *Am Mekadeshei Shevi'i* / the People that sanctifies the Seventh--they will all be satiated and delighted from Your goodness." (From *Shabbat Mussaf*)

R' Matisyahu Salomon z"l (1937-2024; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Gateshead Talmudical College-Etz Yosef in England and Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, N.J.) notes that the two phrases here are discussing two different levels of *Shabbat* observance.

The first group, the lower level, consists of "*Shomrei Shabbat*." This group calls *Shabbat* "a delight," *i.e.*, those in this group enjoy *Shabbat's* pleasures. However, that enjoyment must be a vehicle for recognizing *Hashem's* kindness to us, *i.e.*, rejoicing in His kingship. If one eats and drinks on *Shabbat* solely for his own pleasure, he is not properly fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Oneg Shabbat* / enjoying *Shabbat's* delights.

The second group, the higher level, looks deeper, seeking to understand why *Hashem* created the pleasures of this world. It is not possible that they exist for themselves; G-d must have had a deeper reason for creating them. After reflecting upon this, they will conclude that the reason these pleasures exist is so that we could use them to serve *Hashem*, learning Torah and performing *Mitzvot* with peace of mind and a healthy body. This is the meaning of the second phrase above: *Am Mekadeshei Shevi'i* / the People that sanctifies the Seventh--because they sanctify the physical pleasures they enjoy on *Shabbat*, they are able to be satiated and delighted from Your true goodness--Torah and *Mitzvot*.

(*Matnat Chaim: Shabbat* p.183)

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“Shem and Yefet, he took a garment . . .” (9:23)

“May Elokim give beauty to Yefet, but He will dwell in the tents of Shem.” (9:27)

Rashi z”l notes: It does not say, “They took,” but rather, “He took,” teaching that Shem took more initiative regarding this *Mitzvah* than Yefet did. Therefore, Shem’s descendants received the privilege of wearing *Tzitzit*, while Yefet’s descendants will merit to receive an honorable burial, as it is written (*Yechezkel* 39:11), “I will give Gog [a descendant of Yefet] a place fit for burial.”

Rashi then comments on Noach’s blessing to his two sons: *Elokim* endowed Yefet with beauty inasmuch as the Persian Emperor Cyrus, a descendant of Yefet, built the edifice of the Second Temple. However, the *Shechinah* did not dwell in the Second Temple. Where did it dwell? Only in the First Temple, which King Shlomo, a descendant of Shem, built. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Joseph B. Soloveitchik z”l (1903-1993) explains: Shem and Yefet embody two separate concepts: ethics and etiquette, respectively. Ethics obligates a person to behave well and justly even when he is alone, when there is no one present to praise him. Indeed, an ethical person will behave properly even if people will criticize him for it. In contrast, etiquette is related to beauty, which is in the eye of the beholder and may change over time and from country to country. Etiquette exists solely to facilitate relations between people.

Shem was motivated by ethics to cover his father’s shame. No one needed to encourage Shem to take that step. Therefore he was rewarded with *Tzitzit*, the garment of which is meant to be worn under one’s clothes--i.e., as a private matter--with only the strings sticking out.

Yefet, in contrast, did not help to cover his father until he saw Shem taking the lead. He wanted Shem to think well of him, so he joined in the *Mitzvah* of honoring their father. Therefore, he merited that his descendants would be buried, for burial is meant to show respect to another person.

R’ Soloveitchik concludes: This explains, also, Noach’s blessing to his two sons. Yefet would have a share in building the beautiful structure of the *Bet Hamikdash*. However, the *Shechinah* rests only in the tents of Shem--where there is ethics, not where there is etiquette. (*Nefesh Ha’Rav* p.272)

R’ Moshe Avigdor Amiel z”l (1883-1946; rabbi in Lithuania and Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv) writes: Of course, Jews may observe etiquette and non-Jews may have ethics. The distinction between the descendants of Shem and Yefet lies in which idea drives the other.

For example: The *Mishnah* (*Shabbat* 63a) records a dispute whether one may wear a sword outdoors on *Shabbat* where there is no *Eruv*. The Sages prohibit it, and they cite the prophecy of Yeshayah (2:4), “They will beat their swords into plowshares.” But Rabbi Eliezer permits going out on *Shabbat* wearing a sword, because it is an ornament. [Until here from the *Mishnah*]

Why do they argue? R’ Amiel explains: The Sages and Rabbi Eliezer agree that one may wear an ornament outdoors on *Shabbat*. But what constitutes an ornament? – **Continued in box on facing page** –

“And it came to pass after the seven-day period that the waters of the Flood were upon the earth.” (7:10)

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 108b) asks: What was the nature of these seven days? [R’ Shmuel Eliezer Eidels z”l (*Maharsha*; Poland; 1555-1631) explains: Since the Torah refers to them as “the seven-day period,” there must be something notable about them.] The *Gemara* offers four answers:

(1) These were the days of mourning for Metushelach, who died just then. This teaches us that eulogizing a *Tzaddik* can delay the arrival of punishments.

(2) For seven days, *Hashem* changed the course of nature so that the sun rose in the west and set in the east. [Presumably, this was meant to frighten the people so that they would repent.]

(3) After He gave them a long time to repent, He gave them a short time to repent. [*Maharsha* explains: *Hashem* had warned the generation about the flood 120 years earlier (“a long time”), but those who had not yet been born did not hear that warning, so He gave them seven days (“a short time”).]

(4) *Hashem* gave them a taste of the *Olam Ha’ba* / World-to-Come during this period so that they would know what they were losing out on. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercav Harav) comments on the last answer: It is a wondrous thing to be given a taste of *Olam Ha’ba* in this world. After all, the Sages tell us that all of the prophets prophesied only about the Days of *Mashiach*, but none could envision *Olam Ha’ba*, as we read (*Yeshayah* 64:3), “No eye has ever seen--except Yours, *Elokim*--what He will do for those who await Him.”

R’ Charlap continues: Surely, *Hashem* did not give the Generation of the Flood a taste of *Olam Ha’ba* out of vengeance or spite. Rather, the *Gemara* means that the generation had fallen so low, they were so corrupt, that there was no possibility of awakening them to repent except by giving them a taste of *Olam Ha’ba* so they would know what they were forfeiting because of their corruption. Of course, the fact that they could ignore such a warning was another strike against them.

R’ Charlap concludes: Similarly, whenever a person is given a moment of inspiration--a “taste” from above--and he ignores that inspiration, that fact weighs against him. Accordingly, one must seize the moment to take advantage of the inspiration that he is given and use it to sanctify himself further. [In context, R’ Charlap is referring to the *Pesach Seder*, but, presumably, the idea has general applicability as well.] (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p. 129)

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Rabbi Eliezer holds that whatever people view as an ornament at a particular time and place is an ornament--an etiquette-like consideration. The Sages, though, hold that the fact that there will not be swords in the days of *Mashiach* indicates that such ornaments have no place in an ethical world. And the *Halachah* accords with their view--an example of ethics driving etiquette.

In contrast, writes R’ Amiel, Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato commended knowledge and political order as means to achieve happiness, not as values in themselves--an example of higher communal ideals being driven by personal considerations. (*Le’novochai Ha’tekufah* II ch.1)