



Parshas Noach 2020, uplifting nature

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward. May his soul be uplifted and his memory a blessing.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of Sasson Betzalel ben Batya and Sapir Bas Ariela. May they have a quick and complete recovery.

Our Parsha begins by introducing Noach, a man who remained faithful to G-d while the rest of society descended into chaos. Noach was told by G-d that a Mabul (flood) would soon destroy all of civilization, and only he and his family would survive in an ark that he was to build. He was given the ark's dimensions and commanded to bring along 7 of every kosher animal and a pair of every non-kosher animal.

Noach slowly built the ark to give people a chance to repent and stop the flood, but he was unsuccessful. The rain began on the 11th of Cheshvan as Noach entered the Teivah with his entire family and every animal.

The downpour lasted 40 days and nights, killing all humans and animals that were not in the Teivah. The waters continued to stir and boil for 150 days until G-d commanded it to subside.

Noach sent out a raven to determine the extent of the water's retreat; however, the raven did not fly far before returning to the Teivah. Noach waited and then sent out a dove three separate times. The first time the dove left, it returned empty-handed. It returned with an olive leaf in its beak the second time, indicating that new growth had begun to sprout.

The final time the dove did not return, signaling to Noah that the land had become dried. On the 27th of Cheshvan, Noah and his family exited the Teivah to reinhabit the world exactly one year after entering.

However, a question comes to mind: When Noah left the Teivah, Hashem swore to him and the rest of humanity that He will never destroy the world again. He set the rainbow as a sign and a reminder of His promise. But why did Hashem use the rainbow, something we can create or see naturally, as a symbol of His oath and pledge to the world?!

The Rabbeinu Bachya explains why the rainbow was used because it symbolizes the redirection of G-d's anger from the world. For he compares the idea of the rainbow to a bow and arrow, the bow being the rainbow and the arrow G-d's anger.

The Hebrew word for a rainbow shares the same root word as harsh and severe, קשה/קשה. Since the rainbow is like a bow facing heaven, it represents the reversal of His anger from this world. This is why we say a very powerful Bracha when we see a rainbow, *“Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who remembers the covenant, and is faithful to His promises, and keeps His word.”*

The Rabbeinu Bachya continues that since Hashem said to Noah (9:13) אֶת־קַוְיָיִם אֲנִי מִשְׁקֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּעָנָן, *“And I have placed My rainbow in the clouds”*. The concept of a rainbow reversing G-d's anger only applies to natural ones we see.

He quotes the Midrash Rabbah (35:2) that during the times of King Chiskiyauh, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, and Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, there were no rainbows in the sky because of their righteousness.

However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He holds the opinion that the rainbow only became a natural occurrence after the flood.

According to Chassidus, the society before the flood was so bad and evil that they always had dark and thick clouds above them. Therefore, sunshine and the light of Hashem could not pass through the gloomy clouds.

But when the flood occurred, it purified the world and allowed light and holiness to permeate and fill the world once again.

The Rebbe continues that Hashem used the rainbow as a sign of His promise, so when we see a rainbow, we are reminded to uplift ourselves and nature to its highest potential. To see the deeper meaning behind the natural occurrences and how G-d runs this world.

This lesson is ever more prevalent when we are amid a pandemic that is shaking the world to its core. When our trust, belief, and faith in Hashem must be at their maximum for us to continue striving for a better tomorrow. When our only hope is truly Hashem.

In our daily life, it is imperative we understand that what we say and how we act does not only affect ourselves. But instead, influences and impacts our friends, our families, and society at large. Since we can transform our lives, we can change the world for good. Our actions should be ones that bring blessings to our lives and light to the world.

“Every person has the capacity to build a community and endow communities with life. So that every member becomes a source of inspiration.”

-The Lubavitcher Rebbe

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*