



Parshas Noach, Am Yisroel Chai 2023

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our land, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza from harm and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a complete and speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.

Our Parsha introduces Noach, a man who remained faithful to G-d while the rest of society descended into chaos and anarchy. G-d told Noach that a Mabul (flood) would soon destroy all of civilization. Only he and his family would survive in a Teviah, an ark he was to build. He was given the ark's dimensions and commanded to bring 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 ark with his entire family and every animal. The downpour lasted 40 days and nights, killing all humans and animals not in the ark. 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.

But, It returned with an olive leaf in its beak the second time, indicating that new growth had sprouted. The dove did not return the final time, signaling to Noach that the land had dried. On the 27th of Cheshvan, Noach and his family exited the Teivah to reinhabit the world exactly one year after entering.

I can not get past the third Pasuk of our Torah portion with existential crisis happening in Israel: (6:11) **וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאֲרֶץ לְפָנַי הָאֱלֹקִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאֲרֶץ חָמָס** - **"The land became corrupt before G-d; the earth was filled with Hamas - violence."**

Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, the first Chabad Rebbe, gave a talk on Parshas Lech Lecha in 1890. He said that "מען בעדארף לעבן מיט דער צייט" - one must live with the times." His older brother, Reb Yehuda Leib, explained that this means we should not just learn the weekly Torah portion; but live it and implement its eternal lessons in our daily life.

Growing up, my parents, teachers, and rabbis taught me that the timing of weekly Parsha was no coincidence. Rather, it is a deliberate and intentional effort by G-d to relate and connect with His people no matter where they may be. Accordingly, our great sages instituted that we do not go more than three days without reading the Torah and connecting with its holiness.

The darkness of the world and the chaos we are experiencing are getting louder and stronger every day. Yet, one thing remains steady and unwavering: G-d's Oneness and Wisdom. Although His Oneness and Wisdom may seem like separate qualities, they are one and the same. G-d created us with His great wisdom, and our existence against all odds proclaims His Oneness to the world.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson writes on Parshas Noach that the Torah begins by seemingly portraying humanity as a failure to teach us a profound lesson.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that a pessimistic view is critical of hopes and dreams while cherishing gloom and doom. It robs people of their confidence and belief and exchanges it with fear, anxiety, and despair. Hence, a pessimistic and negative society can not survive or endure, for it devalues growth, advancement, and innovation.

While an optimist is precisely the opposite. An optimistic view cherishes aspirations and ambitions while devaluing negativity and cynicism. This outlook gives those without hope or faith the inspiration and energy to grow and transform their lives.

Accordingly, a positive and optimistic society thrives despite misfortunes and tragedies like we are experiencing today. Because there is always a dream to aspire to and a promise to fulfill.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that we must ask ourselves, which camp are we in? What perspective do we see? Which side do we stand on?! The Torah is abundantly and perfectly clear on which side it's on.

Just following the story of the whole society descending into chaos and rebellion against G-d, we learn about Avraham Avinu, a man who was unwavering in his belief. A person who came to the realization that there is a higher purpose and a greater mission than the vanity of this world.

He passed down this understanding to his son, Yitzchak Avinu, who exemplified this realization. First, by the Akedah, the altar, he was supposed to be offered as a sacrifice to G-d. Then in Be'er Sheva, where he famously dug seven wells even though the Philistines were filling them.

He gave this perspective to his son, Ya'akov Avinu, who embodied this awareness with a resolve that gives us strength today. From fighting Esav's angel to believing his son was still alive, Ya'akov maintained his faith and trusted G-d to keep him in the right direction.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks a question: Which part of the world do we focus on? The mistakes, faults, and errors of humanity? Or the faith, trust, and belief of our forefathers that was passed on to us?

This immensely powerful lesson is ever more relevant as the chaos around us swells, and the challenges don't seemingly stop; whose side do we stand on? What perspective do we see? Which idea is worth fighting for?!

וְרָאוּ כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עֲלֵיךָ וַיִּרְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ:

“And the world's nations will see that the name of G-d is proclaimed over you, and they shall stand in fear of you.”

-Moshe Rabbeinu in his final speech to the Jewish people. (Devarim 28:10)

Have a meaningful Shabbos

Rabbi Sholom Yemini