

Parshat Noach: Luminous Light

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Chanie Koplowitz-Stein

In Parshat Noach, Hashem instructs Noach to build an ark and He provides for light through a *tzohar* at the top of the ark. The commentators argue whether this was a window or a pearl that emitted its own light.

After the rains stopped, Noach opened a *chalon*/window to send out a raven, and later a dove. Some commentators ask why *tzohar* instead of *chalon* is used earlier if the source of light was indeed the window. Rabbi Schonberg suggests that since both these interpretations are cited by Rashi, they are not two separate interpretations, but two ideas that complement each other. The *Oznaim Latorah* explains that the window could indeed illuminate the upper level. But an additional source of light was needed for the lower levels which was provided by the *tzohar*/gem.

After the flood, after Hashem tells everyone to leave the ark, He resolves the question, "Continuously, all the days of the earth... day and night shall not cease." According to Rashi, there was no difference between day and night, the sun did not shine to give light, and so a window would be useless. Rather, the stone was the source of the light. *Otzrot HaTorah*, cites the *Sifsei Chachamim* that although there was no cycle of the orbit of the sun, the sun stayed in one place throughout that period. Since the ark floated unpredictably, there were times they were in the sphere of the sun and times they weren't. Hence the need for both the window and the stone.

Rabbi Wolfson asks how the ark and Noach were able to withstand an impossible flood

where the waters came from above and from the bowels of the earth? The *Zohar Hakadosh* notes, that just as each of the Avot represents one of the major festivals, Noach, represents *Shabbat*, *noach*=respite, calm; *Shabbat menuchah*=*Shabbat* rest. The ark itself was made of gopher wood/גפר/גפר numerically equal to *השביעי*/השביעי the seventh day, both totaling 453. Within the ark, every day was *Shabbat* for the full 40 days to provide the aura of spiritual protection, a protection not granted to the rest of the world. This was the light emitted by the *tzohar*, a supernal light that Hashem sends down daily and impacts the lower world we live in. This is what we refer to on *Shabbat*, "You Who opens daily... the windows of the firmament." The *tzohar* provided general light, while the window allowed the celestial light to enter and create night and day.

When the Torah says that Noach sent out the raven and the dove it says, *veyeshalach*. Noach opened the window and sent out these messengers together with this primal light. We have the ability to create this light in our own homes and lives through *Shabbat*. Just as the birds took that light with them when they left the ark, so must we take the spirit of *Shabbat* with us as we enter the week. The ark was also a mini *Beit Hamikdosh* and, as in the *Beit Hamikdosh*, the windows widened outward, spreading the supernal light from within to the outside world.

Eretz Tzvi suggests that the window and the stone represent two powerful tools to combat the *yetzer horo*. The window produces no light of its own. When the *yetzer horo* appears as a scholar, it blocks the external light of reason

from entering, as a shade blocks light. But it allows the Godly light to enter. In contrast, when the *yetzer horo* appears as physical temptation that so fully envelops the person, he must rely on his internal light, the *Torah*, to counteract the lure of the *yetzer horo*.

Mesameach Zion suggests that Hashem brought the flood so that the world would go through a process of destruction and rebirth. The very cycle of the year attests to this. We begin on a high with the *yomim tovim* followed by a month with no holidays. The lulls are not falls, but a necessary pause to re-energize and re-assess one's path. As Rabbi Tatz notes, our task is not to fall into depression, but to find inspiration within ourselves, our inner light, and build from there.

Why was the world destroyed because of *chamas*/thievery? The Ziv Hechochmah says, this is the the root cause of a corrupt society - selfishness. Noach, having been affected was now compelled to learn *chesed* with the animals. We are all required to feel the pain of others and to pray for them and that can only happen when we care about others.

Rabbi Cohen quotes the Ba'al Shem Tov that *teivah* can also mean a word. If we put *tzohar*/light into our language, if we uplift others with words, we will be safe from the depraved language of a society that drags us into darkness. Rav Hershel Rimanover urges us to infuse our davening with *Torah* and light, even if it's just one word. And the greatest way to infuse true meaning into our prayer is to pray for others, for that brings joy to Hashem.

Tehillim 94- Struggling with Evil and Injustice

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

Tefilah comes from the root word *palul* -

wrangling. Yaakov didn't become Yisrael until he wrestled with the angel. A Jew doesn't start with a position of faith. Most of us don't know what real faith even means. We just conform to what we were raised with. Not only does Hashem have little to do with it, but even if He does, it's in a distant way. Faith is something a Jew comes to when he reaches out to Hashem, *mimaakim*- from the depths. When you fall and struggle and are forced to search for Hashem, then you can attain true *emunah*.

Rashi tells us that chapters 90 -101 is attributed to Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the *shir shel yom* of Wednesday. *Chazal* tell us that when Moshe went up the mountain the second time, he turned to Hashem and asked, "Show me your ways..." *Chazal* explain that he asked about *tzadik v'ra lo*. Hashem answered, no human being can see me and understand and remain alive. This is an answer we will not get in this world, but it's a question that must be asked. You can't reach true *emunah* without struggle.

"O God of vengeance, O Lord; O God show vengeance." Chazal say vengeance is holy and we see it here where *nekama* is placed between the two names of Hashem. *Redak* says *hoveah* is *atid* written in the form of *avar*. We beg Hashem to avenge His people.

"Understand, [you] most boorish of the people, and [you] fools, when will you gain intelligence?" This refers to someone who lives in the moment neither looking at the past or future. The *Malbim* says a fool might be aware of the consequences of his actions, but he can't let go of his momentary desires. "Fortunate is the man whom You chastise, and from Your *Torah* You teach him." It's conceivable that we will try to justify suffering, searching for cause and effect, so that it makes sense. *Maduah* is looking backwards to see what led to this and sometime there are answers. *Chazal* tell us if a person sees suffering coming upon him, he should examine his deeds. And another word for why in Hebrew is *lamah*- *leshem mah* - for what

purpose? Where do I go from here? Man can rejoice with suffering if he turns it into *daat*- knowledge that is transformative.

Happiness is overrated. Life is about learning and growing. A Jew can rejoice with suffering because he knows there's a higher purpose. We may not understand it because we don't know the *emet*. *Emet* is composed of aleph the first letter, *mem* the middle letter and *saf*, the last letter. Hashem is the first and the last- "*Ani rishon v'ani acharon*." We are stuck in the middle. We don't know what happened in the past and what will be in the future. We don't have a sense of the whole picture, but through it all- "*Imi onochi b'tzara*- Hashem is with us in our pain."

Why do we suffer? Because we are the people of Hashem and this is not a war against us, but against Hashem. "And He returned upon them their violence, and for their evil, may He cut them off; may the Lord our God cut them off." In the end, we will see Hashem's vengeance.

Yechezkel-Perek 38 Gog and Magog- The Final War

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Yechezkel, Chapter 38 discusses the events that will take place before *Mashiach* comes. There are three ideas addressed: 1. Gog's plan to destroy us. 2. The ultimate annihilation of Gog, as a consequence of his evil actions 3. The aftermath of the war of Gog and Magog and the sanctification of Hashem's name that will result. The Rambam writes openly about these events in *Hilchos Teshuva* and *Hilchos Melachim*, yet he still discouraged delving too deeply. This is because the events will emerge in accordance with the time it necessitates, and we do not have a tradition of how things will actually transpire. There are numerous possibilities and trying to figure it out exactly doesn't lead to love and awe of Hashem. Still, we need to know the general picture so that we can understand our role.

The general definition is that it will be a difficult time before *Mashiach* comes, compared to labor pains before birth. The *Midrash* tells us that *Gog u'Magog* equals the gematria of 70 hinting that the wars will involve all the nations. *Gog u'Magog* means

the roof and the roofer. The superpowers of the time view themselves as defining reality the way a roof turns an edifice into a building. There will be three separate wars. Two are discussed in this chapter and the third is in Zecharya. The war will begin when Gog attacks the people who returned to Israel, which makes it clear that there will be an initial return. This relates to *Mashiach ben Yosef* which the Gra says is an era and not an individual. It's the physical redemption preceding the spiritual redemption and the events that are discussed in this perek will take place during the first redemption.

Seventy nations will be involved in this great war parallel to the number of Sancheriv's troops and the number of enemies Avraham fought against in the battle of the four and five kings. What do the nations of the world have against us? Maharal explains that the fact that we were chosen creates a feeling of rejection and an all-consuming hatred against us. The four kings correspond to the four exiles - Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The third and final war will be a war of *Kiddush*

Hashem when Hashem will avenge all the terrible destruction the nations wrought.

"Hashem spoke to me saying -Human being turn your face towards Gog of the land of Magog the prince and leader of *Meshech* and Tuval and prophesy concerning him." Josephus spoke of Magog as being the Cephians and this fits with the Gemara that translates Magog as Gutia. The Goths were a group of nomadic tribes who destroyed the Cephians and took over their land. The Goths were a Germanic people. This fits with Targum who translates Magog as Germania. So, it seems as if the Navi is referring to a great and horrific nation called Germania and that the ancestors of the nations that oppose us, the German nation and the nation of the north - Russia, are who Magog are related to. They will lead *Meshech* and *Tuval* who are descendants of *Yefet* and are identified as Persia. This tells us that a main component of the armies that will fight against us will be Persia (Iran) along with Germania and the northern and Edomite forces.