



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Unnatural Phenomena

Presented by Rabbi Yitzchak Kaminetsky, Kollel Scholar

Towards the end of Parshas Noach, after the world has become repopulated, the people come together and begin building a great tower – the Tower of Babel. Rashi quotes a midrash that explains that the people calculated that there were 1,656 years between Creation and the Mabul (Flood). Now that another 1,656 years had passed since the Mabul, they feared that another storm was coming and decided to build a tower tall enough to “support the heavens” and prevent another deluge.

Leaving aside the efficacy of such a strategy, on the surface, their actions seem reasonable – after all, we too build flood barriers, monitor weather, and take precautions against natural disasters. Why, then, were they punished so severely?

The Sifsei Chachamim explains that while it’s natural and even responsible to take precautions, in this case their actions revealed a fundamental misunderstanding. They saw the Mabul as a random natural event—a climatic pattern they could outsmart through engineering. What they failed to realize was that the Mabul wasn’t a quirk of nature; it was a direct response from Hashem to human corruption and immorality.

When we experience difficulties or global challenges and explain them away as “just nature,” we fall into the same trap. While we must do our hishtadlus (human effort) to protect ourselves, we also have to remember that everything that happens in the world—no matter how “natural” it seems—is ultimately Hashem communicating with us.

The Rambam (Hilchos Ta’aniyos 1:3) writes that it is a cruel attitude to respond to tragedy by saying, “This happened as part of the natural order; it’s just coincidence.” Such thinking prevents us from introspection and ultimately brings further hardship.

Whether it’s a tragic storm or a miraculous victory, it can be tempting to dismiss what happens in the world as “nature.” But Hashem asks us to look deeper—to see every event as a message, an invitation to reflect, grow, and draw closer to Him.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

Remembering Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

And Terach died in Charan... (11, 32)

Why did the Torah place the death of Terach before the departure of Avraham to Eretz Yisroel (which took place before Terach's death)? So that the matter should not be publicized to the public, because they would say that Avraham did not fulfill the obligation of honoring his father and abandoned him at an advanced age. (Rashi)

Is a person obligated to honor his father if he is a wicked person? No. (Tosafos Yevamos 22b)

Chizkiyahu dragged his father's bones on a bed of ropes, in an embarrassing manner, because his father was a wicked person. (Rashi Sanhedrin 47a)

If there is no obligation to honor one's wicked father, what would be wrong if Avraham left Terach at an advanced age?

Which animal in this week's parsha kept Shabbos?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:
Why is the sky blue?

Answer: It reflects Hashem's throne which is "made of sapphire," which is blue. (Chulin 89a)

Parsha Riddle

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Noach (9:1), the Torah relates that "Hashem blessed Noach and his sons, and said unto them 'Be fruitful, and multiply (pru u'rvu), and replenish the earth.'" This is a reiteration of His blessing to Adam and Eve in parashas Bereishis (1:28) "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ..." While many commentaries understand the plain meaning (pshat) of "be fruitful and multiply" to be a blessing (see Ibn Ezra, Radak, and Ralbag), the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud interpret it as a commandment (Yevamos 6:6 and 65b).

In two other locations, however, the Talmud cites a different source for the imperative of procreation, a verse in Isaiah (45:18): "He created it (the world) not a waste; He formed it to be inhabited (la-sheves yatzarah)." Tosafos offer several explanations for the citation of this verse as opposed to "Be fruitful and multiply," one of which is that the verse in Isaiah constitutes proof that procreation is a particularly great mitzvah (Tosafos Gittin 41b s.v. Lo Tohu).

Another suggestion of Tosafos is that the verse in Isaiah applies more broadly than the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. The Mishnah (ibid.) states:

A man is commanded with regard to the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply, but not a woman. Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka says that a woman is also commanded, as the verse states with regard to both of them: "And G-d blessed them, and G-d said to them: Be fruitful and multiply."

The halachah follows the first opinion that only a man is included in the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Tosafos suggest that a slave (whose obligation in positive commandments is limited to those in which a woman is obligated) is not included in the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, but is included in the imperative of sheves. Tosafos presumably means that since women are not obligated in the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, neither are slaves, but they both are obligated in the imperative of sheves (Magen Avraham siman 153 s.k. 9). Some authorities, however, suggest that a woman may not be obligated in the imperative of sheves (see Beis Shmuel siman 1 s.k. 2, and cf. Antziklopedia Talmudis: Piryah v'Rivyah: Chiyuv mishum la-sheves yatzarah; Harchavos l'Pinei Halachah 5:3:1).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. Don't confuse me with a rat.
2. The Torah is not on me.
3. I was the resting place.
4. I was the Haman family climb.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I mean easy.
2. I was a captain.
3. I was a favorite.
4. Was I righteous?

Last Week's Answers

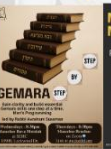
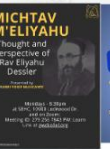
#1 Light (I am from the first day, I am not man made, Speech caused me, I am not heavy.)

#2 Grass (Esef) (I am not Yaakov's twin, I am not moldy, yet I'm green, You cut me to control me, I have blades.)

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