

פרשת נח

History is dynamic; it is ever-changing.

Sometimes that dynamism is difficult to grasp. One day continues to the next: 'Sunrise, Sunset, Swiftly flow the days, Sunrise, Sunset'.

On the other hand, there are periods and epochs where the dynamics are so profound that their impact cannot be ignored and when their impression is long-lasting.

Our Torah seems to continually present us with such significant events that are life-changing, ones with an ongoing effect.

Particularly in the early Parshos of Sefer B'reishis we may note such profound dynamism: Creation, the banishment of Odom and Chava from Gan Eden, to name a few.

On the other hand, a more considered view might note that the Torah may certainly give more words to those dynamic events, but in the course of the first two millennia of history, cataclysmic events were few and far between.

Avraham Ovinu, who first appears at the end of this week's Parshas Noach and was born in the year 1948¹, is the beginning of the Torah's slower account of the passage of time. That is, the vast majority of years from Creation to his birth were marked by עולם כמנהגו נוהג, the world continued on its path without any outward signs of unique change.

From a Torah standpoint, the shift from worship of HaKodosh Boruch Hu to idolatry was certainly an event of enormous proportions, but Ramban has taught us that that move was very gradual and perhaps the transition was hardly perceptible.

Rambam writes in the beginning of Hilchos Avoda Zarah (Perek 1/Halachos 1-3):

בימי אנוש טעו בני האדם טעות גדול ונבערה עצת חכמי אותו הדור ואנוש עצמו מן הטועים היה, וזו היתה טעותם, אמרו הואיל והא...לקים ברא כוכבים אלו...וחלק להם כבוד והם שמשים המשמשים לפניו ראויין הם לשבחם ולפארם ולחלוק להם

¹ The Torah presents us with the length of lives of the various generations and one who follows the relative P'sukim will arrive at that number. That year is also mentioned in Seder Olom.

כבוד, וזהו רצון הא...ל ברוך הוא...כיון שעלה דבר זה על לבם התחילו לבנות לכוכבים היכלות ולהקריב להן קרבנות ולשבחם...כדי להשיג רצון הבורא בדעתם הרעה...

In the days of Enosh², people erred a great error and the counsel of the wise men of that generation, including Enosh himself, erred foolishly. This was their error: They said that since G-d created these stars and gave them honor and they are his servants who serve Him, it is appropriate to praise them, and to acclaim them and to honor them and such is the will of G-d *Baruch Hu*. Once they had this counsel, they began to build sanctuaries for the stars and to offer *korbonos* for them and to praise them in order to please the Creator, as they thought with their evil opinion.

ואחר שארכו הימים עמדו בבני האדם נביאי שקר ואמרו שהאל צוה ואמר להם עבדו כוכב פלוני או כל הכוכבים והקריבו לו...ובנו לו היכל... והתחילו על דרך זו לעשות צורות בהיכלות ותחת האילנות ובראשי ההרים... ומתקבצין ומשתחיים להם ואומרים לכל העם שזו הצורה מטיבה ומריעה וראוי לעובדה וליראה ממנה,

As time passed, false prophets arose among the people and said that G-d commanded and told them to worship a particular star or all of the stars and to offer them *korbonos* and they built a sanctuary and in this way they began to make images in the sanctuaries and under the trees and on mountain tops and people assembled and prostrated themselves before the images and told everyone that this this [particular] image does good and [this particular image] does harm and it is proper to serve it and to be in fear of it.

... והתחילו כוזבים אחרים לעמוד ולומר שהכוכב עצמו...דבר עמהם ואמר להם עבדוני בכך וכך...ופשט דבר זה בכל העולם לעבוד את הצורות בעבודות משונות זו מזו ולהקריב להם ולהשתחוות, וכיון שארכו הימים נשתכח השם הנכבד והנורא מפי כל היקום ומדעתם ולא הכירוהו ונמצאו כל עם הארץ הנשים והקטנים אינם יודעים אלא הצורה של עץ ושל אבן וההיכל של אבנים שנתחנכו מקטנותם להשתחוות לה ולעבדה ולהשבע בשמה, ... אבל צור העולמים לא היה שום אדם שהיה מכירו ולא

² Enosh was the first born of *Sheis* ben Odom HoRishon. That is, he was Odom's grandson. Odom HoRishon lived for many centuries after the birth of Enosh. See B'reishis Perek 5/Posuk 6 and the surrounding verses to make that simple computation.

יודעו אלא יחידים בעולם כגון חנוך ומתושלח נח שם ועבר, ועל דרך זה היה העולם
הולך ומתגלגל עד שנולד עמודו של עולם והוא אברהם אבינו.

And other deceivers began to arise and say that the star itself spoke with them and told them 'worship me in such a way'. And this spread throughout the world to worship these images in various ways and to offer them offerings and to prostrate before them. As time passed, Hashem The Glorified One and the Awesome One was forgotten by all existence and they did not know Him and all the simple people and the women and the children only knew the image of wood or stone and the sanctuary that of stone in which they were educated in their infancy to prostrate before it and to serve it and to take oaths in its name.

But, the Rock of Eternity – no one knew Him except for select individuals such as Chanoch, Mesushelach, Noach, Shem and Eiver.

In such a way the world continued to exist until the pillar of the world was born – Avraham Ovinu.

More than once Rambam tells us that 'time passed'. An extraordinary event – forsaking G-d, Creator and Mover of all existence – took place over centuries and almost no one noticed.

Perhaps, such is the nature of mankind.

On the other hand, there were events that occurred rapidly, in a short amount of time. There was nothing gradual about them.

What is our expectation about such events that could not go by unnoticed? Certainly, we expect, their impact will be great, forceful and everlasting.

Undoubtedly, the *mabul* – the flood was such an event. The entire world was decimated. We would surmise that its impression would be long-lasting, if not eternal.

Rashi tells us that the term *מבול* implies three distinct effects. We read in our Parshas (B'reishis Perek 6/Posuk 17):

וְאֵנִי הַנְּנִי מְבִיא אֶת הַמַּבּוּל מִיָּם עַל הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחַת כָּל בֶּשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת
הַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ:

And I Hashem, behold I am bringing a flood of water on the land to destroy all flesh beneath the heavens that has a living spirit in it; all that is in the land will die.

Now, I assume that most of us hear the term 'flood' and understand that it means that an overwhelming and massive amount of water inundates an area. If we borrow the term 'flood' and use it in other contexts, we still know that its basic meaning refers to water.

Therefore, when the Torah, with its precise wording, writes a 'mabul' of water I understand that the term *mabul*, that means a flood of water also has alternative connotations. And it is to that point that Rashi writes various explanation that are all related to the core letters of *Mabul* – *beis* and *lamed*:

מבול - שבלה את הכל, שבלבל את הכל, שהוביל את הכל מן הגבוה לנמוך...שהציף את הכל והביאם לבלל שהיא עמוקה:

Mabbul – It destroyed everything; it confused everything; it brought everything from above to below because when it flooded it brought everything to Bovel which is in a valley.

Not only was the *Mabbul* an acute event, its ramifications were in many and varied areas.

Certainly, we understand, that the Divine wrath that brought it about could not be forgotten.

But it was! And not only was that Divine wrath forgotten but the meaning of the flood was turned around completely.

In fact, there is a Midrash (Midrash Tanaim Mechilta Parshat 31 d.h. *ki yachris*³) that astoundingly writes:

שמא תאמרו מפני מה גוים עובדי עבדה זרה עובדים לאילים ומשתחוים לעצבים חיים? בזכותו של נח.

If you will ask why the idolatrous nations worship their gods and prostrate to that which they fashioned?

[The answer is:] In the merit of Noach.

³ Cited in *Torah Shleima*.

Before we continue with the Midrash and see its explanation of the relationship of Noach and the paganism of the idolaters, we have to review the events of Parshas B'reishis and Noach.

Let us see three verses that may appear to be repetitive and redundant.

At the Creation of Odom, the Torah writes (B'reishis Perek 1/Posuk 26):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים...לִקְיָם נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּבְבְהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הַרֹמֵשׁ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ:

G-d said, 'Let us make man in our image and in our form and they will rule over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and animals and over the entire earth and over all the creatures that creep on the land.

And at that same time, at the Creation of Man, we read two P'sukim later (Posuk 28):

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים...לִקְיָם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם א...לִקְיָם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשְׁהָ וַיְרִדוּ
בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיַּי הַרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ:

G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and capture it and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over all the living creatures that creep on the Land.

And then in our Parshas Noach, following the flood, we read (B'reishis Perek 9/Posuk 2):

וּמִרְאֵיכֶם וּחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּי הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמָשׁ
הָאָדָמָה וּבְכָל דְּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ:

Your awe and your fear will be upon all the animals of the land and upon all of the fowl in the heavens and in all that creeps upon the ground and upon all of the fish of the sea; they have been given in your hand.

We can, perhaps, explain the two almost consecutive P'sukim in Parshas B'reishis as being first a statement of the nature of man vis a vis the rest of the natural world and then, as the second Posuk writes, informing Man of that nature.

Also, perhaps, we can explain the statement to Noach in our Parsha as being a reiteration of that which was already known but was appropriate to be said again once the world was 'starting over', as it were⁴.

But, before we can decide if those tentative suggestions are true, we must refer to the commentators and assemble some basic information.

Rashi writes to the first of three verses above:

וירדו בדגת הים - יש בלשון הזה לשון רידוי ולשון ירידה, זכה רודה בחיות ובבהמות,
לא זכה נעשה ירוד לפניהם והחיה מושלת בו:

They shall rule – This phrase of וירדו has the expression of רידוי, rule, and ירידה, decline. If man merits, he rules over the wild and domesticated animals. If man does not merit, he declines before the animals and the wild beast rules over him.

The implication of Rashi's words are very clear. HaKodosh Boruch Hu did not establish an unchanging relationship between Man and the animal kingdom. Man's superiority, his 'rule' is not immutable. His rule is a *zechus* and therefore he has to earn the *zechus* and, if not, lose it.

This basis of this principle was already intimated in Masseches Sanhedrin (38 a):

תנו רבנן: אדם נברא בערב שבת, ומפני מה... שאם תזוח דעתו עליו אומר לו: יתוש
קדמך במעשה בראשית.

The B'raisa taught: Odom was created on Erev Shabbos? Why? If he will become conceited, it says to him, "[Even] a mosquito preceded you in Creation."

And why was Man given dominion over the lower creatures? Radak continues the line of reasoning of Rashi and expands upon it. We read:

וירדו בדגת הים - להודיע כי כל נבראי מטה לא נבראו אלא בעבור אדם ושיהיה הוא
בשכלו מלך ומושל עליהם, שאם לא כן לא היה בעולם השפל מי שיכיר מי בראו;
ואמר וירדו לשון רבים... וירדו כי הממשלה והשררה לאדם בברואים בשני חלקיו בכח

⁴ Although we will not deal with them, some of the commentators attend to the different order in which the various creatures are listed in these verses and suggest that those changes have much to teach.

השכל לחשוב מחשבות איך ירדה בהם, ובכח הגוף בתכונת ידו שנעשו בתכונת
נפלאות לעשות בהם כל מלאכת מחשבת מה שאין כן בשאר הנבראים:

They shall rule over the fish of the sea – this teaches that all of the lower creations were only created for Man so that he, with his intellect, will be a king and rule over them. If it would not be so, there would be no one in the lowly world who would know Who it was Who created them.

The term וירדו, is in the plural and literally means ‘they will rule’ because Man’s rule and officialdom over the other creations has two aspects. One aspect is with his intellect to think and devise plans how to rule over them. The second aspect is with his physicality that with the design of his hand, that was made with wondrous design, to work with his hands thought-out and creative work – [a capacity] that which does not exist in the other creations.

Man’s rule, Radak teaches, has a purpose to serve HaKodosh Boruch Hu. Since Man can recognize Who his Creator is, man’s rule and dominion is intended to further G-d’s rule and dominion. Man, therefore serves as an intermediary to connect the rest of the world with its Creator.

וחז"ל דרשו (בראשית רבה פרשתא ח) וירדו בשתי לשונות לשון רדייה ולשון ירידה,
כי לכך אמר וירדו ולא אמר וימשול לרמז בו זה הדבר שאמרו כל שהוא בצלמינו
כדמותינו ירדו בהם, ואת שאינו בצלמינו כדמותינו ירדו.

And Chazal interpreted the term *v’yirdu* as having a double meaning, ‘rule’ and ‘decline’. It is for that purpose that the Torah employed the term וירדו, meaning ‘rule’ instead of וימשלו, which also means ‘rule’, to hint at this double meaning.

Chazal said, Man will rule when he fulfils his rule of ‘being in our image and our form’; if not, he will decline.

And in this continuation of his commentary, Radak presents us with the framework that determines ‘rule’ or decline’. Man was created ‘in the image of G-d’ and thereby is capable of spreading His rule over the world. When Man fails to live up to that ‘image’, he is no longer capable of spreading the Divine rule over creation. When that occurs, there is no purpose in his ‘rule’; ‘decline’, then, becomes his fate.

Or HaChaim HaKodosh continues the commentaries of Rashi and Radak and extends them even further.

What does it mean that through Man's dominion, G-d's rule over creation will be known and recognized? We read:

ואמרו וירדו יסכים לפירושינו להיות שהבריאה היא בהדמות לבורא בבחינת הרחמים והדין בדין הוא שיהיה מושל בנבראים כי יש בו בחינת הרחמים לראוי ולצריך אליו ולהמית למתחייב בדין. והשליטו בכל....

When the Torah writes 'they will rule', that is in consonance with our explanation since the Creation is to be similar to the Creator in the aspects of mercy and justice. It is just that Man should rule over the other creations because he possesses the attribute of acting mercifully with those who are deserving and need Man for their benefit as well as administering judgement and to execute those whom justice requires to do so and thus Hashem gave Man dominion over all.

It is by the very virtue that Man was created in G-d's image and his deeds are to reflect G-d's attributes of mercy and justice that Man was to be G-d's representative on earth to bring those Divine attributes in our lower world. That is the justification of Man's rule.

What happens if Man no longer represents those Divine attributes? Or HaChaim continues:

ובדרך רמז רמז באמרו לשון ירידה על דרך מה שהודיענו ז"ל (ספר הגלגולים) כי באמצעות מעשה האדם ירד במדרגתו מבחינת אדם לבחינת דגים ולבחינת עופות ולבחינת בהמה ולבחינת שרצים כפי ערך החטא ישפל אדם מבחינת מעלתו עד אשר ירד מטה מטה:

And there is a hint through the choice to use the term וירדו that it can also hint at decline as Chazal taught that by the means of Man's [inappropriate] actions he will decline from the characteristics of 'Odom' and be like the characteristics of the fish and the characteristics of the fowl and the characteristics of the animal and the characteristics of the creeping creatures. According to the valence of the sin, Man will be lowered from his high level until he descends downward and downward⁵.

⁵ In his commentary, Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch points out that the seeming duality of explanations of וירדו meaning 'rule' or 'decline' is truly inherent in the choice of that word meaning 'rule'.

Now that we have seen the fullness in which the commentators deal with the dominion that was given to Man at this creation, what was added when Noach was seemingly given that same dominion after the flood, as we saw in that Posuk from our Parsha above?

Although *Radak* understands that the term used vis a vis Noach מוראכם is no different than the implication of וירדו that was used in regards to Odom HoRishon, Malbim sees a difference and that difference requires analysis.

The Posuk regarding Noach, from our Parsha reads:

He writes:

וירדו...משמעות היסוד של "רדה": להוריד דבר ממרומי חירותו ולהביאו אל ידו - ושלטונו... להשתלט על עצם מבחינה מסוימת של מהותו... להפעיל את שלטונו בכל בעלי החיים, בהם ובארץ עצמה; בבואו לקיים את תפקידו כאדם ישלול מהם מקצת מחירותם ויביאם לידי חלקית. אם ישלוט ביצורים כ"אדם" - בצלם א...לקים ובדמותו - ברצון יקבלו את עול שלטונו; שלטונו איננו שעבוד והשפלה, אלא עילוי להם ושיתופם בחירות הא...לקית. העולם כולו ייכנע ברצון לאדם הטהור העובד את בוראו. אך אם ינצל האדם את מעמדו לרעה, ולא ישלוט ביצורים כ"אדם" - כנציג ובא כח לא...ל - , אלא בכחו ובעוצם ידו, לא ברצון ייכנעו לו בעלי החיים...

They will rule – the implication of the *shoresh* רדה is to lower something from the height of its freedom and to bring it under his control – to rule over it in a specific aspect of its nature.

Man is to actualize his control over all creatures, on them and on the land when he comes to fulfil his role as Odom. He will negate from them some of their freedoms and have partial control over them.

If Man rules over them as Odom, in his being in the image of G-d and in His form, the creatures will willingly accept the yoke of his rule. Man's rule is not one that is degrading. Rather it raises the creatures and gives them a role in willingly fulfilling Divine Will. The entire world will willingly subjugate itself to the will of Man who is pure and who serves his Creator.

However, if man takes advantage of his superior position in an evil way, his rule will not be that of Odom, as the representative of G-d, but rather by virtue of his superior strength – then the creatures will not subjugate themselves willfully to man.

וּמִוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאָדָמָה
וּבְכָל דָּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ:

Your awe and your fear will be upon all the animals of the land and upon all of the fowl in the heavens and in all that creeps upon the ground and upon all of the fish of the sea; they have been given in your hand.

Malbim writes:

וּמִוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחִתְּכֶם יִהְיֶה. שִׁיְהִי לָהֶם מִפְּנֵי יִרְאָה טִבְעִיית, וְיֵשׁ הַבְּדֵל בֵּין מִוֹרָא וּבֵין חַת שֶׁהַמִּוֹרָא הוּא שְׁלֵא יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ רַעָה, וְחַת הוּא הַהֲכַנְעָה הַטִּבְעִיית כִּמוֹ שִׁכְנַע הַקָּטָן לִפְנֵי הַגָּדוֹל

Your awe and your fear will be - the animals will have a natural fear of man. There is a distinction between the terms מִוֹרָא and חַת. The former means that because of that awe, the creatures will not harm man.

The latter term, חַת, means that there will be a natural subjugation, just like that which is small subjugates itself in face of that which is big.

Malbim now explains why this innovation, that which wasn't stated to Odom HoRishon, must be stated to Noach following the flood. He continues:

וּבְאִשֶּׁר בִּימֵי נֹחַ הִתְחִילוּ הַחַיּוֹת הַטּוֹרְפוֹת לֵאכּוֹל בֶּשֶׂר וְיֵשׁ סַכְנָה לָאָדָם מִפְּנֵי הַחַיּוֹת
הַמְּזִיקוֹת, בֵּרַךְ אוֹתוֹ ה' שִׁיִּרְאוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ, וְיִתְחַבְּאוּ בִּיעֲרוֹת וּצְחִיחִים וְיִבְרַחוּ מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי
אָדָם...

Since in the days of Noach animals of prey began to eat the flesh [of other animals] and therefore mankind was endangered from those destructive animals, Hashem blessed Noach that the animals will be fearful of him [and mankind] and they will hide in the forests and in the crevices and they will flee from before people.

Malbim is teaching that the fear of creatures before man would be 'natural'. But wasn't it natural already from the time of Odom? Why was a 'renaturalization' required for the era beginning with Noach and how was this 'new' nature different than the 'original' given to Odom?⁶

⁶ In one edition of Midrash B'reishis Rabba (Albeck, Parshata 34) we find that the change was temporary.

And thus we read in Masseches Shabbos (151 b):

ותניא, רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: תינוק בן יומו חי - אין צריך לשומרו מן החולדה ומן העכברים, אבל עוג מלך הבשן מת - צריך לשומרו מן החולדה ומן העכברים, שנאמר ומוראכם וחתכם יהיה, כל זמן שאדם חי - אימתו מוטלת על הבריות, כיון שמת - בטלה אימתו.

The B'raisa teaches: Rabi Shimon ben Elazar says: a new born-baby does not need protection from the weasel or from rodents. [The giant⁷] *Og King of Boshon* who has died – needs to be guarded from the weasel and from the rodents as it says: your awe and your fear will be...

When a person is living, his fear is upon the creatures. When he dies, that fear is annulled.

In his commentary to *Aggados Chazal*, Maharal explains:

כל זמן שהאדם חי אימתו מוטלת עליו. פירוש מפני כבוד הצלם אשר הוא נבדל, ולפיכך מוראו של אדם שנברא בצלם אלקים על כל חיות השדה, והצלם הזה דוקא כאשר הוא חי ולא כאשר הוא מת.

When a person is living, his fear is upon the creatures – the explanation is that the fear stems from the *Tzelem E...lokim* that a person has; that distinguishes him and therefore his awe is upon the animals of the field

ומוראכם וחתכם וגו' מורא וחתית חזרו ורדייה לא חזרה, אמתי חזרה, בימי שלמה כי הוא רודה בכל עבר הנהר וגו' (מלכים א ה/ד).

Your awe and your fear etc. – Awe and fear returned in the relationship between man and the other creatures but 'rule' did not return.

When did it return? In the days of Shlomo HaMelech as it says, Shlomo *ruled* over the entire other side of the river, etc.

⁷ We read (D'vorim Perek 3/Posuk 11):

כִּי רַק עוּג מֶלֶךְ הַבֶּשֶׂן נִשְׁאַר מִיְתֵר הַרְפָּאִים הִנֵּה עָרְשׁוֹ עָרֵשׁ בְּרָזֶל הִלָּה הוּא בְּרַבַּת בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן תִּשָּׂע אַמּוֹת אָרְפָּה וְאַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת רְחֵבָה בְּאַיִת אִישׁ:

Because only Og King of Boshon remained from the rest of the giants; behold his bed was a bed of iron, is it not in Rabbat B'nei Amon? Its length is 9 amos and its width is four amos, in the *amah* of a person.

If the representative opinion of an *amoh* is 18 inches, 1.5 feet, then the bed that Og required was about 13.5 long and 6 feet wide.

because man was created in the image of G-d. That *Tzelem E...lokim* is only upon a person who is alive, not when he is dead.

When Odom was told that man would rule over the lower creatures that was at the very onset of his life. That was when he had continual access to the עץ החיים, the Tree of Life.

We know that the Tree of Life had a unique power. We learn of that power when Odom and Chava were banished from Gan Eden, as the Posuk teaches (B'reishis Perek 3/Posuk 22):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָאָדָם הִנֵּה הָאָדָם כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ לָדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וְעַתָּה פֶּן יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַחַי לְעֹלָם:

Hashem E...lokim said, 'Behold, Odom has become like one of us to know good and bad, and now, lest he send his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and live forever.'

When Odom was given his *Tzelem E...lokim* at his creation, it was for him to possess and to pass on to all future generations. At that moment, the *Tzelem* would never leave him because he could live forever.

However, death was decreed upon all mankind. And so we read in that same Parsha (Posuk 19):

בְּזַעַת אֶפְיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבְךָ אֶל הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לִקְחָתָּ כִּי עֹפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל עֹפָר תָּשׁוּב:

You shall eat bread with the sweat of your brow until you return to the land from which you were taken; because you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Therefore, there is a tentative conclusion that we can reach at this point. If that information which was stated to Odom HoRishon was a result of *his* *Tzelem E...lokim* and that message that was restated to Noach with differences, whether they were nuanced or more explicit, that implies that the *Tzelem E...lokim* in man was no longer the same.

But, we may ask, since there was a change already at the time of Odom HoRishon, when death was decreed upon him and all of mankind, why was that difference

only noted now. Did something else change in the meantime that required a restatement of the relationship between Man and the lower creatures?

The answer is, of course, a resounding 'yes'.

Immediately following the flood, as stated before the Posuk upon which we are focusing, Hashem proclaimed (B'reishis Perek 8/Posuk 22):

עַד כָּל יְמֵי הָאָרֶץ זֶרַע וְקָצִיר וְקָר וְחָם וְקִיץ וְחֹרֶף יוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ:

From now on, all of the days of the land, the seasons of planting, harvesting, cold, warm, summer and winter, day and night, will not cease⁸.

Radak⁹ writes there:

ואמר לא ישבתו, מלמד ששבתו בשנת המבול, ואמת כי זרע וקציר שבת וכן קר וחם וקיץ וחרף שבתו למקבלים וכן יום ולילה, כי לא הבדילו בין יום ולילה בתבה, ואפשר כי בארבעים יום וארבעים לילה שהיה הגשם לא היו השמש והירח והכוכבים מאירים, כי היו מעננים כל אותם הימים.

The verse says – they will not cease. This teaches that they ceased in the year of the flood. The truth is that this was what the recipients sensed. They did not perceive the different seasons in the Ark and they did not distinguish

⁸ Rashi explains:

עוד כל ימי הארץ וגו' לא ישבתו - שש עתים הללו שני חדשים לכל אחד ואחד...

From now on, all the days of the land, etc...will not cease – this six times/seasons have two months each.

קור - קשה מחורף:

Cold – it is harsher than *choref* – winter.

חורף - עת זרע שעורים וקטניות החריפין להתבשל מהר.

Choref/winter – it is the time to plant barley and beans that ripen quickly.

קיץ - הוא זמן לקיטת תאנים וזמן שמייבשים אותן בשדות...

Summer – it is the time of picking figs and drying them out in the fields.

⁹ Rashi deals with this as well but Radak elaborates.

between day and night as well¹⁰. It is [also] possible¹¹ that for the forty days and nights that it rained that the sun, moon and stars did not give light because the clouds blocked them all of those days.

We can now return to the Midrash that we brought earlier and complete the citation and understand the events that occurred.

The Midrash writes:

שמא תאמרו מפני מה גוים עובדים עבודה זרה עובדים לאילים ומשתחווים לעצבים
חיים בזכותו של נח שנאמר עוד כל ימי הארץ וגו'

Perhaps you will say that the nations are idolaters, they worship gods and bow down to images that they formed – they live in the ‘merit’ of Noach as it says, ‘from now on all the days of the land’.

The Midrash is saying, I think, that the nations of the world perceived the profound changes that occurred in the world. Nature, as they knew it, ceased to exist. The very character of nature no longer existed.

If the very character of nature as they knew it no longer existed, then they claimed that all the rules had changed. That which was prohibited previously was no longer prohibited. He Yisborach Who created and directed the world was no longer in a position to do such anymore.

All had become permitted ‘in the merit of Noach’ who survived this upheaval of the very order of existence¹².

¹⁰ In this first explanation, Radak says that in reality the seasons and day and night did not cease. But the perception in the Ark was that they did cease. That perception did not reflect the true reality.

¹¹ In his second explanation, Radak posits that in fact the seasons and day and night did cease in objective reality, at least for the forty days of rain.

¹² In light of this discussion, perhaps we can express a homiletic, if not p’shat, explanation to the Gemara in Masseches Sanhedrin 56 a.

The Gemara there discusses the source in the Torah of the *Sheva Mitzvos B’nei Noach*, the Seven Divine Commandments that were binding upon all of humanity. One opinion learns them all, or most of them at least, from a Posuk regarding Odom

Of course they were wrong. Their fatal flaw was that they saw 'nature' as being an independent entity, something that has its own inherent existence. Certainly they were wrong – 'nature' is no less a creation of G-d than anything and everything else that exists.

But, they pointed to the era of Noach and they justified their idolatry on that cataclysmic change that occurred.

In fact, if we attend to the 'logic' of the idolaters of that time and analyze it carefully, we may find ourselves questioning our own actions and our own outlooks.

Do we not say, 'circumstances are different'? Do we not claim that the changes that have occurred over the years and decades require us not to continue certain behaviors and *hashkafos* that were an integral part of Jewish belief for centuries?

Do we consider if, in fact, that the changes that are made are justified means of preserving Torah and our fealty to G-d or are we changing the 'ends' and not only the 'means'?

The Midrash that discusses the 'merits of Noach' has a conclusion. It would do us well to attend to that conclusion to insure that we are not imitating an attitude that was founded some 4300 years ago.

We read:

and Chava and the other learns it from P'sukim that were said immediately after the Flood.

Perhaps, the reasoning that we are espousing here required those Mitzvos, even if they were given to Odom HoRishon to be restated and re-commanded to Noach after the Flood to teach that although nature had changed, G-d has not changed and His Mitzvos are eternal and everlasting.

We do note that this is most likely not the *p'shat* because Rambam has paskened (Hilchos Melachim Perek 9/Halachah 1) that the *Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach* were given to Odom.

והרי הדבר קל וחומר ומה אם גוים עובדי עבדה זרה חיים בזכותו של נח אנו לא נחיה בזכות אברהם יצחק ויעקב תלמוד לומר (ברים יט/ט¹³) כי תשמור את כל המצוה הזאת בשכר מצוה אתם חיים אין אתם חיים בזכות אבות:

You may think to make a *kal vachomer* – If these nations of idolaters live ‘with the merit of Noach’, should we not live with the merit of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov? Therefore the Posuk teaches, ‘When you will guard all of this Mitzvah’ – in the merit of Mitzvah you live. You do not live in the merit of the Ovos.

¹³ The entire verse reads:

כִּי תִשְׁמֹר אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְלִלְכֹת בְּדַרְכָיו כָּל הַיָּמִים וְיִסַּפֶּת לְךָ עוֹד שְׁלֹשׁ עָרִים עַל הַשְּׁלֹשׁ הָאֵלֶּה:

When you will guard all of this Mitzvah to do it – that which I command you today to love Hashem your G-d, to go in his ways all of the days; you will add on another three cities in addition to these three.

The choice of this verse as a proof text for the Midrash seems questionable. There are other P'sukim in the Torah that have the same words: to guard of a Mitzvah.

This Posuk deals with the establishment of the ערי מקלט, the Cities of Refuge, and states that in future times there should be an additional three cities, added on to the three in *Eiver HaYarden*, and the three in Eretz Yisroel proper making a total of 9. Why was this verse chosen?

Perhaps the reason for the choice of this verse is that this Posuk in particular underscores the attitude that we are to have - an unswerving loyalty to G-d's commandments and not to change His Mitzvos because of our perceptions of changes that occur in the world in which we live.

Rashi (B'midbar Perek 35/Posuk 14) points out that even though the population of *Eiver HaYarden* was about the third of that of Eretz Yisroel proper, it still had the same number of Cities of Refuge because in *Eiver HaYarden* people were more violent.

Would we not think that לעתיד לבוא, at the End of Days, the world will be more peaceful. Why would we need even more Cities of Refuge for unintentional murder? Would we not sense that we should lower the number of Cities of Refuge instead of increasing their numbers?

Therefore the Torah promises that with the observance of this Mitzvah which seems to be counter-intuitive we will receive the fullness of G-d's blessings.

Ultimately, our fealty is to the Torah and its Mitzvos. We definitely require *z'chus Ovos*, but that is not our goal.

Our goal is to live because of our direct relationship with HaKodosh Boruch Hu Who has given us His Mitzvos.

And that is the lesson of the conclusion of Parshas Noach. We are introduced to Avraham Ovinu whom the Rambam (Hilchos Avoda Zarah Perek 1/Halachos 2-3) terms:

עמודו של עולם...איתן

The pillar of the world...the strong one.

The accomplishments of our Father Avraham were based on *his* merit.

May we model ourselves after our *Ovos* and seek to have our own merit before G-d and His Torah and Mitzvos.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock