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**The World of Shabbos**

**By Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein, zt”l**



**Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein, zt”l**

Let’s travel into the world of Shabbos and examine it for ourselves …

The New York Times was very interested in this Jewish observance called Shabbos. Looking to inform their readers and the general public about the nature and nuances of this day, they decided to send a reporter named Steve to a religious home, who would participate in all aspects of Shabbos observance and report back about his inside experience.

Steve began making phone calls, searching for the most suitable Jewish, Orthodox family he could stay with over Shabbos and be exposed to what Shabbos is all about. He eventually got on the phone with someone who seemed open to the idea. “I’d like to spend a Sabbath with you and write up a report to be published in the New York Times. Would you be open to me staying with you and your family?” The family acquiesced, informing Steve that sunset was at 4:18 and he should arrive at 4:00.

Steve arrived promptly at 4:00 at the Rosenthal address and knocked on the door. Within moments, the door opened and Steve was met with a smile. It was Mr. Rosenthal. “Please, come on in,” motioned Mr. Rosenthal, shaking Steve’s hand and walking him in. Instantly, Steve felt overwhelmed. Not by his host, but by the home which smelled other-worldly, between the freshly baked *challah,*spiced cholent and delicious chicken soup. It brought Steve vaguely back to Thanksgiving, the time when all his family gathered around and cooked and baked together. But today was just another Friday afternoon like any other. It seemed like a big party was about to begin.



The family, with the children dressed in their finest suits and dresses, quickly made their way to Steve and warmly invited him in. “It’s so nice to have you join us for the Sabbath,” remarked Mr. Rosenthal, a welcoming tone in his voice. “Is there a wedding tonight?” Steve asked, rather curiously. Mr. Rosenthal shook his head. “It sure seems that way,” giving way to another smile. “We do this every week for Shabbos.” Steve knew that this wasn’t how his family walked around his house Friday night. That was for sure.

A few minutes later, as Steve made himself comfortable on the sofa, he noticed Mrs. Rosenthal and her three daughters make their way to a beautiful candelabra. It was silver and sparkling. It seemed to Steve as if he was watching angels. Placing their hands over their eyes, they began softly murmuring some prayer, as they slightly swayed with mesmerizing grace. About a minute later, Mrs. Rosenthal turned around, hugged and kissed her daughters, greeted her husband again with a smile and began walking him to the door. Steve, following Mr. Rosenthal’s gesture, got up too, as Mrs. Rosenthal and her daughters wished Steve a good Shabbos and expressed how excited they all were to have him join them.

Mr. Rosenthal, now standing near the door, turned to Steve. “Steve, I’m heading to the synagogue now. You’re welcome to come along.” “I’d love to,” Steve replied, fixing his collar and giving a quick pat to his button-down shirt. Turning around, he saw that Mrs. Rosenthal and her daughters were putting the finishing touches to what he expected was dinner, after which they made their way to the living room and relaxedly sat on the couch and opened books. It seemed that they were praying some more.

There wasn’t another distracting sound. No phones ringing or music blaring. Just the whispering hum of Mrs. Rosenthal and her daughters quietly reciting their prayers. It was like heaven. He couldn’t wrap his head around the fact that this was done every single week. Steve was so captivated by everything that had already happened, though he knew that more surprises were certainly around the corner.

Quite literally.

Making his way down the block, he caught up with Mr. Rosenthal who had reserved a seat right next to him at the synagogue. Everyone around looked immaculate in their neatly pressed suits and shined shoes. Steve was taking it all in. The children too, in their cute suits and dresses, were congregating around one man who sat in the corner. He, as Steve came to realize, was the candy man.

And then came the hymn of *Lecha Dodi*, and the entire synagogue erupted in melodious song. Steve couldn’t get enough of it. Energy, harmony, life and love was palpably felt in the air, as if you could grab it with your hands. Steve remained, quietly to himself and alongside Mr. Rosenthal, towards the back of the *shul.*

All of a sudden, everyone stood up and turned around, reciting the concluding lines of *Bo’i b’shalom.*Steve, unaware of what was going on, had stood up, but didn’t turn around. So, there he was, opposite the entire congregation who swayed and chanted, facing him. Now Steve knew he had done it. He’d blown his cover. Everyone had turned around to look at him, realizing that he wasn’t Jewish. A few moments, later, all the men turned back around to face the Ark.

Steve, confused, quietly approached the man seated right in front of him. “Excuse me, but I’m new here. What was that all about? Why was everyone looking at me? What were they saying? “We were welcoming the Shabbos and saying, ’*Bo’i b’shalom,’*Come in peace.” Steve’s eyes widened in intrigue. “I never would’ve thought that a room full of people would turn to face the Sabbath and greet it as if it were a real person and actual entity. That’s so beautiful. I need to write about this in the paper.”

The prayers came to end, after which Steve and Mr. Rosenthal headed back home, as they greeted several people on their way and wished them a ‘Good Shabbos.’

There. sat Mrs. Rosenthal and her daughters on the sofa, now reading, smiling and laughing together. Within a few minutes, everyone was seated around the table and again, singing began. Mr. Rosenthal’s voice echoed throughout the home, a vibrant resonance felt throughout. The children then, one by one, walked up to their father, who placed his hands on their heads and recited the Friday night blessing that they grow up to become like the Matriarchs. He then gave each one a hug and kiss. Steve watched every unfolding move with wonder.



Kiddush over wine was next, after which the family gathered around to wash their hands. And then the *challah*was uncovered and taken a bite of. Heaven on earth, thought Steve to himself. The next courses of fish and matzah ball soup only dazzled Steve doubly so. The kids, in between and during courses, each brought out papers from school that stimulated questions and lively conversation. And then there was singing with all different tunes. Slow, emotional tunes and fast, lively tunes. It all was there.

What got to Steve more than anything was that everyone remained at the table. He couldn’t remember the last time that was true of his family. And there still was no phone ringing or anyone running to catch the last minutes of the game. “Amazing!” Steve told himself over and over. For over two hours, the family sat together, talking about their week, life on the whole and Judaism.

And then came dessert. Steve recalled having dessert in restaurants or on special occasions. But a regular Friday night? He was having a four-course meal, from fish to soup to the main dish to dessert. Incredible! Steve didn’t know, at this point, that he would be having many more courses over the span of a full Shabbos.

After the meal concluded and the family sat around, talking to another for some time longer, they bid each other a ‘Good Shabbos’ and began heading up the stairs. “Where is everyone going?” Steve asked. “Talk to friends, watch something?” Mr. Rosenthal smiled. “We don’t do that. We’re heading upstairs to read or learn a little and then go to sleep. In the morning, we head back to synagogue.” “So, no phones?” Steve wondered again. “That’s right,” responded Mr. Rosenthal.

The next morning, there was Steve again with Mr. Rosenthal. The Torah scroll was removed from the Ark, men were called up, and then back the Torah went, into the Ark. Afterwards, an assortment of various foods – from *cholent*to *kugel*and more in between – was put out for everyone to grab a bite, as the rabbi shared some words of Torah insight and inspiration.

Mr. Rosenthal and Steve made their way back home after some more time in *shul.*“Now, what are we going to do? Play some ball?” “We’re going to eat again!” said Mr. Rosenthal. And there it was. Fish, chop liver, cholent, kugel, kishke. Steve had never seen anything like this in his life.

After lunch finished, everyone again sat down together and talked to each other. At this point, Steve asked the question. “Are you all together like this for over twenty-four hours?” Everyone nodded their heads, looking at each other with smiles. “And all you do is pray, learn, talk, eat and sleep?” They nodded their heads again.

“Now I understand why Jews have energy throughout the whole week!”

At 4:00, Steve awoke, only to see the three Rosenthal girls about to walk out the door. “Are you going somewhere?” he asked. “We’re going to an afternoon Shabbos program.” “What do you do there?” Steve pressed on, wiping the sleepiness away from his eyes. “We listen to Jewish stories and insights, talk to our friends and have some special Shabbos treats.” Steve couldn’t help but think about his own children and how they would love to have such an opportunity with their own friends every Saturday afternoon. Praying, stories, food, sleep, studying, love, togetherness, family – it all came together in one day called Shabbos.

And then came Havdalah with its candle, spices and all the symbolism that Steve inquired about and came to appreciate.

As the candle was snuffed out, Steve turned to the family. “I have one question for you all. Why would anyone not want to do this?

*Reprinted from the Parashat Bereishit Newsletter of Toranytime.com as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**On Parshas Noach**



The greater a person is or believes he or she is, the smaller the room for error in one’s life decisions. Had Noach been merely Mr. Noach, his choice of beginning the world again with a vineyard and wine would have been acceptable and even understandable. After all, the trauma of the destruction of so many human beings in the waters of the great flood required some sort of release of tension and an escape mechanism. But he was not just plain Noach when the Lord commanded him to build his ark and restart humanity.

**A Person of Such Noble Character and Pious Nature**

He was Noach, the righteous man of his generation, the person who represented goodness and service to G-d and humanity. He was special, an exalted person who overcame the influences of a wicked and dissolute society and withstood its ridicule and insults. A person of such noble character and pious nature should not begin the rebuilding of human society with vineyards and wine.

It sent the wrong message to his progeny and through them to all later generations as well. Holy people are to be held to holy standards of behavior and endeavor. There are no one-size fits all in ethical and moral standards of behavior. The rabbis of Midrash taught us that with a greater human capacity for holiness there is a commensurate capacity for dissolute behavior as well.

**The Responsibility of Spiritual Greatness**

The Talmud states that it is the scholarly righteous who have the strongest evil inclination within them. The responsibility for spiritual greatness is commensurate with the capacity for the holy greatness of each individual person. This is why Noach finds himself criticized by Midrash, and later Jewish biblical commentators, in spite of the Torah’s glowing compliments paid to him in its initial description.

A person of the stature of Noach should not be found drunk and disheveled in his tent, an inviting figure for the debauchery of his own offspring. The failure of greatness is depressing. As King Solomon put it: “If the flame has consumed the great cedars, then what else can be the fate of the hyssop of the wall?”

Greatness carries with it enormous burdens and fateful consequences. As we pride ourselves on being the “chosen people” we are held by Heaven to behave and live our lives as being a chosen people. Wine and drunkenness will not suffice for a nation that is destined to be a be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a special people.

**The Goal of Pursuing the Greatness of Abraham**

Burdened by this greatness the Jewish people have fallen short of the mark numerous times in our history. But we have always risen again to attempt to fulfill our destiny and realize our potential. It is this characteristic of resilience, inherited from our father Abraham, that has been the key to our survival. We have constantly dealt with great ideas and issues. Drunkenness, whether physical or spiritual, has never been a trait of Jewish society. We are aware of the story and fate of Noach, but we pursue the greatness of Abraham as our goal in life.

Shabbat shalom

*Reprinted from this week’s website of rabbiwein.com*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Saying it’s All Good**



**QUESTION: Should we say that all is good even though we don’t feel it?**

**ANSWER:** And the answer is yes! Because vehalachta bedrachav – you have to walk in the ways of Hashem, and it says in the Torah: וירא אלוקים את כל אשר עשה – Hashem saw all that he had made, והנה טוב מאד – and behold the whole thing is very good (Bereishis 1:31). Hashem said this is a very good world! And so, instead of walking around and grouching, “It’s too hot. It’s so humid,” or “It’s too cold – it’s nasty; it’s raining;” instead of that, we should always speak well of Hashem’s world.

It’s hot? Wonderful! The apples are getting red on the trees.  The pears are becoming sweet on the trees.  If it wasn’t hot, they wouldn’t become sweet.  It’s cold? That’s also wonderful! The earth now is taking a rest from producing and while it’s taking a rest it’s recuperating all the minerals it lost, all the materials it lost during the summertime.  Without the winter, there can’t be a summer.  If it was summer all year, the earth would keep on producing and it would become arid and infertile.  That’s why the earth takes vacation in the wintertime.  Cold is wonderful.  Cold forces the earth to stop producing.

Rain is wonderful! Without rain, we’re nothing.  When it rains, we’re coming down from the sky. You came down in the rain once upon a time! We’re almost 80% rain. We came down from the sky once.  And people are grouching and complaining about the rain.  Here we were coming down from the clouds and they were complaining against us.  That’s our chance to come to this world! That’s rain! And therefore, when rain comes down, all the boys of the yeshivos are coming down and their future brides, the kallos from Bais Yaakov, are coming down.  They’re all coming down together from the sky.  So, rain is wonderful.

So, Hashem says it’s a very good world, and He wants us to keep on saying that all the time. הודו להשם כי טוב – Give praises to Hashem that He gave a very good world; and if you keep on saying it, after a while, after some time, you’ll begin to feel it.

*Reprinted from the October 19, 2022 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #799 – September 1990).*

**The Connection Of the Mabul**

**(the Flood) and Our Current Exile**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



In this week's Torah portion, Noach, we read the famous story of Noach and the flood. It was at the express command of G-d that Noach first entered the ark, as it states, "Come you and all your household into the ark." It was also at G-d's express command that he left it, as we are told, "Go forth from the ark, you and your wife and your sons, and your sons' wives with you."

Thus, it is difficult to understand why Noach sent out the raven and the dove to determine if the Flood had ended. If Noach was supposed to wait until G-d told him it was time to leave, why did he send the birds out to see if the waters had abated? Why wasn't he content to wait for G-d's command?

In truth, by sending the birds from the ark, Noach was expressing his strong desire to leave it. Rather than waiting for G-d to come to him, he did all in his power to facilitate his exit. Noach sent the raven, and indeed sent the dove out twice, in the hope that the Flood had receded and it was already permissible for him to leave.

When G-d saw Noach's efforts and observed his intense longing to go out, He hastened to issue His command. In fact, the command "Go out of the ark" was given in the merit of Noach's exertions.

**Our Perceptions of Reality are Confused**

Exile, is likened to the mabul (Flood), for in exile our perceptions of reality are mevulbal (confused). The spiritual nature of the world is hidden, whereas physicality is easily perceived. In exile it is hard for the Jew to appreciate that his true function is the service of G-d, for the material world conspires to obscure the underlying reality. The confusion of exile is so great that the falsehood of the world is often mistaken for truth.

In such circumstances it is forbidden to sit back with our arms folded. We cannot wait until G-d will come and tell us to go out of exile.

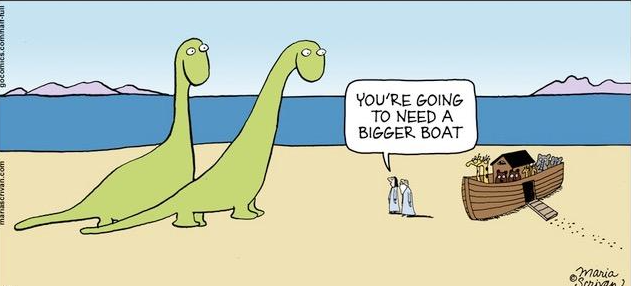
Learning from the example of Noach, we must also do all in our power to determine if the misfortune has ended and hasten our departure from exile. Rather than wait placidly for the exile to be over, we must expend all necessary efforts to put an end to it immediately.

**The Importance of Believing in Moshaich**

What can we do? First, we must believe that at any minute the exile can end and Moshiach will come. Second, we should disseminate the belief in Moshiach and the anticipation of his coming. We must also increase our performance of good deeds, and bombard G-d with petitions and prayers that He remove us at once from the exile and bring us to Redemption.

When G-d will see our strong desire and intense longing to leave exile, most assuredly He will hasten to send our Moshiach. In the merit of our efforts, He will certainly fulfill our hearts' desire, and bring Moshiach to us at once.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Noach 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Hitva’advuot 5745, Volume 4..*



*Reprinted from a cartoon illustrated by Maria Scrivan.*

**Thoughts that Count**

**For Parshat Noah**

Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generation; with G-d Noah walked (Gen. 6:9)

The Torah goes into such detail to describe the righteousness of Noah to show that he was meticulous in observing both categories of mitzvot, those that involve serving G-d, and those that involve our responsibility to our fellow man. "Perfect in his generation" refers to the proper way that Noah treated every human being, and "with G-d Noah walked" refers to the fact that Noah served G-d diligently. *(Pardes Yosef)*

A righteous man, a tzaddik, is a person who "walks with G-d," so the above verse appears to be redundant. The Torah is showing us just how great a person Noah was. He was indeed, "perfect in his generation," acting in a righteous manner when he was out among the people of his generation. Yet even when "he walked with G-d," alone, with only G-d to witness his actions, he still behaved in a righteous manner. *(Yalkut Hadrush)*

All flesh has corrupted his way on the earth (Gen. 6:12)

In the days before the flood, the moral situation had deteriorated to the point that even those who by their nature recognized the difference between right and wrong lost that sensitivity and began to sin without feeling a sense of guilt and wrongdoing. *(Baal Haturim)*

G-d said to Noah, "Enter, you and all your family, into the ark." (Gen. 7:1)

Every detail in the Torah contains eternal lessons that we can utilize even in our times. The Hebrew word for "ark," teiva, also means "word." G-d is commanding every one of us to "enter" the words of Torah, to read each word with feeling and understanding. *(Baal Shem Tov)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Noach 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim.*

**The Lesson of the**

**Cruel Raven**



And he sent out the raven, and it went and returned [immediately]. (8:7)

Rashi writes: The raven suspected Noach of coveting his mate. The raven is the symbol of cruelty, for the mother raven abandons her newborns and does not feed them. When the raven saw that Noach sent him out into a world covered with the waters of the flood, he suspected Noach of cruelty.

This is the meaning of Rashi's statement, for cruelty is the raven's mate. [The raven's behavior, according to the above interpretation, demonstrates the principle that one will always see his own faults in others] (Avnei Ezel)

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Reb Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s whY I Matter, the parsha sheet for the Young Israel of Midwood in Brooklyn.*

**From The Weekly Vort**

Noach had begotten three sons: Shem, Cham and Yafes (6:10). Why does the Torah enumerate that Noach had three sons? It could have listed their names and let us count them for ourselves.

The Gemara (Yoma 62b) asks a similar question regarding the two he-goats in the Yom Kippur service. There is a rule that when a plural noun appears without a specific number, it indicates exactly two, the smallest plural number. Since the Torah specifies two he-goats, the Gemara learns that the numeral comes to teach us the requirement that the two he-goats must be a pair – like twins – similar in appearance and value.

In the above pasuk, the number "three" teaches that although born in separate years, Noach's sons were like triplets in that they all equally inherited their father's ability to perfect themselves in all of the three ways in which Noach perfected himself (he was righteous, he was perfect, and he walked with Hashem. [see 6:9]).

That only Shem emulated his father was not because Hashem decreed that it be so, but rather resulted from the way each one chose to react to the trials of the wicked generation in which he grew up. (Kol Dodi on the Torah – R’ Dovid Feinstein)

■ לתבה תעשה צהר – Brightness shall you make for the ark (6:16).

Some commentators interpret this source of brightness as a skylight, and others say it was a precious stone that illuminated the teivah (ark). R’ Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, in expounding on the importance of concentration during tefillah, quotes the Baal Shem Tov:

“The word teivah can also mean ‘word’. Thus, the expression can also imply, ‘You shall make an illumination for the word’, i.e,. every word of prayer. Each word should sparkle with the proper intent, pronunciation, and knowledge of its meaning.”

R’ Mendlowitz adds that the teivah rescued Noach and his family from the flood. Similarly, the teivos (words) of tefillah can save each of us from the “flood” of immorality, dishonesty and secularism that threatens to overrun our society.

By concentrating on every word of the tefillos, we come to appreciate our total dependence on Hashem and we become cognizant of His Divine Providence. This in turn leads us to be more observant of the words and directives of Hashem. (Reflections of the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn).

*Reprinted from the Parshas Noach 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.*