

זכור את־יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל־מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

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WHEN NOACH NOACHED THE WORLD

ILAN WRESCHNER
SHEVET TZION

There seems to be a contradiction between the end of *parashat Bereishit* and the promise that Hashem made to Noach after the flood. At the end of *parashat Bereishit*, Hashem looked at mankind and decided they were evil and warranted destruction. However, after the flood, Hashem told Noach that, due to the fact that mankind was evil, He won't send a flood to destroy them again. This is confusing as pre-flood being evil was the reason for Hashem to destroy the world yet afterwards it's the very reason why Hashem won't! What changed?

The answer can be found in the influence Noach had on the world. Noach's mission was to bring the world to *teshuva*. When Hashem declared that the world was to be destroyed, Noach's response should have been to pray for his generation, not getting on with building the ark to save himself. Whilst Noach took 120 years to build the ark to allow his generation to see him and repent, he never actively went out to deliver this message. This was Noach's flaw. He is described as a *tzaddik*, but only in his generation. Meanwhile, Avraham Avinu cared about all of God's creations. The comparison to Avraham is explicit in *Pirkei Avot*, 5:2, where it says the ten generations from Adam to Noach angered Hashem so He destroyed them in the flood whereas in Avraham's merit the following ten generations from Noach to Avraham were saved. Perhaps Noach could have saved his ten generations too; Targum Onkelos goes as far as to translate "וַיִּחַד נֹחַ אֶת מִצְדָּתוֹ" as 'Noach found **mercy** in the eyes of Hashem', not 'favour'. Interestingly, Noach's name translates to 'rest'. This is because Noach was only a passive hero in this story.

How does this relate to our contradiction? An idea I heard from Rav Binny Davis is that Noach can also translate to 'calm'. Between those two statements from Hashem, Noach 'Noached' (=calmed) the world in terms of its spiritual potential, for good and for bad. Due to the lower spiritual potential of the post-flood generation, destruction was no longer a fair punishment for their evils. Hashem judges each generation individually, therefore, it is not a contradiction to say that this generation warranted one level of punishment and another, weaker generation warranted a lighter punishment for the same sins.

It was in Hashem's mercy that the later generations were spared destruction because although they were just as evil (*Pirkei Avot* doesn't differentiate), Hashem judged them according to their lower overall spiritual potential.

At first glance, Noach was a hero. A surface-level reading suggests that Hashem decided Noach was a *tzaddik* worth saving so instructs him to build an ark and rebuild mankind. When we look deeper, many of the *meforshim* criticise Noach. Although his *bein adam l'makom* was great, his *bein adam lachaveiro* was lacking as he didn't care enough about his generation. This is the difference between Avraham and Noach that allowed Avraham to merit to be the founder of Judaism and the first of the forefathers. Avraham synthesised *bein adam l'makom* and *bein adam lachaveiro*. He realised they are equally crucial in fulfilling the will of Hashem. In our lives we must also realise that although the *mitzvot* such as returning lost property or visiting the sick appear to be based more in basic morals and less 'Jewish' than Shabbat or *davening*, they are definitely no less important and we must strive to fulfil them.

ILAN IS IN SHEVET TZION AND WAS A MADRICH ON WINTER-NET MACHANE 5781

London In 17:26 Out 18:27
Manchester In 17:32 Out 18:37
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Brighton In 17:30 Out 18:32

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Liverpool In 17:35 Out 18:40
Thaxted In 17:25 Out 18:28
Jerusalem In 17:18 Out 18:30

SHLICHA'S CORNER: IMOTEINU - WOMEN IN TANAKH

SARAH IMEINU



We read about Sarah Imenu in the stories of Bereishit and learn from her character. In the story of Yitzchak's birth, we can learn about an important quality she had.

When the angels arrived at Abraham and Sarah's house, they announced the birth of Yitzchak:

וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוֹב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעַת חַיָּה וְהִנְהִיבֹן לְשָׂרָה אֶשְׁתְּךָ
וְשָׂרָה שָׁמְעַת פֶּתַח פְּתָח הָאֹהֶל וְהוּא אֶחְדָּרֵי

"And he said, 'I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!' Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him (Bereishit 18:10)"

Sarah Imeinu is elderly and refuses to believe she is physically capable of bearing children, so she reacted:

וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אֶחְדָּרֵי בְלִי
הֲיִתְהַלְלִי עֲדָנָה וְאֶדְנִי וְקָו:

"And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'Now that I am old, am I to have enjoyment—with my husband so old?' (ibid. v.12)"

Sarah doubts her ability to conceive and bring life into the world, because of Avraham's age. In the next verse, when Hashem addresses Avraham, we see that he changed Sarah's words:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלֵי־אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הָאֵךְ
אֶמְנָם אֶלְד וְאֶנִּי זְקֵנָת:

"Then Hashem said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?' (Bereishit ibid. v.13)"

Why did Hashem change the content of Sarah's claim? Sarah was taking issue with Avraham's old age, not just her own - Hashem knows what words Sarah used and what meaning they had!

One Midrash explains that Hashem changed the words so as to maintain peace between them (AKA *shalom bayit*) - so that Avraham wouldn't be offended by Sarah's way of speaking about him, as she doubts his ability to bear children and puts the blame on him.

But there is another midrash that explains the change differently. Says the Midrash:

"Hashem said, 'You make yourselves young and your friends elderly, and have I grown old from performing miracles?!'"

Hashem says to Avraham, and from there it is expected to get to Sarah: who is it that causes the birth of babies and the ageing of adults? Isn't it I?! Why do you doubt My ability to make miracles if I'm the one who gives birth and ages?!

The Midrash looks deep into Hashem's understanding of Sarah's words and reveals that there is another layer to her thoughts. Sarah Imeinu lived at a time when Hashem never revealed Himself through unnatural miracles. Who is to say that He would actually do such an unnatural phenomenon? That kind of thing was "out of this world", relative to Avraham and Sarah's world of concepts.

**HASHEM SAYS:
WHO IS IT THAT
CAUSES BIRTH
AND AGEING? IS
IT NOT I?! WHY
DO YOU DOUBT
MY ABILITY TO
MAKE MIRACLES?**

All the miracles that are unnatural, such as the ten plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea and more, are miracles that happened after Avraham and Sarah's days. In the time of the *avot*, no one had yet witnessed miracles above the laws of nature that Hashem can perform, and so Sarah raises a question: how at such an old age can she and Avraham have a child? In fact, we are witnesses to the fact that Sarah Imeinu questioned fundamental issues of faith towards

Hashem: bringing life into the world at an old age when that is against all the laws of nature they knew! How can Hashem do such a thing? Can God really break the laws of nature?

We learn from Sarah Imeinu that we must ask these questions! We must not live under the misconception that we cannot ask questions about *emunah*, there isn't a taboo to ask questions in Judaism. On the contrary - we must raise difficulties, learn and search to consolidate our religious-Jewish worldview, and at the same time strengthen the belief that there is nothing more sublime than Hashem, Lord of the world.

If Sarah could question something that didn't seem right to her, even when it was spoken by an angel, we can too. We can, and we must.

**RABBANIT AVIYA GOODMAN IS IN SHEVET SHVUT
AND IS THE NEW RABBANIT SHLICHA OF BNEI AKIVA.
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SVIVOT - SUKKAH CRAWL INTERVIEW:

This week, our dedicated Sviva correspondent got in touch with Benjy Donoff, one of the co-Roshim at Edgware Sviva, to ask him how their Sukkah crawl went...

How was your launching event for Edgware Sviva this year?

It was a great success! We had a higher-than-expected turnout, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed. It was an excellent setting for the madrichim and chanichim to start to get to know each other for the coming year, forming kesharim that can last throughout a chaver/a's Bnei Akiva journey.

Around what did you theme your Sukkah crawl?

Sukkot

Could you elaborate?

As we were walking, instead of singing 'What do you like about Shabbat,' we sang 'What do you like about Sukkot!'



Do you feel that there is a greater desire from chanichim and madrichim to be involved with Sviva after Covid?

Chanichim numbers are higher than ever before; they finally have the chance to be back at Sviva. Madrichim did have the chance to socialise in small groups before, but now the opportunity has returned to be involved with the community, giving of their time to others, and many are welcoming this with open arms.

How did you find the overall experience as a first-time co-Rosh?

Stressful! As we got closer to the date, numbers skyrocketed and we frantically had to find more hosts for our chanichim, but we managed to do so successfully, and on the day everything ran smoothly and the chanichim really enjoyed themselves. It couldn't have been better!

TORAH FROM AROUND THE WORLD DON ISAAC ABRABANEL | NAHALA 30TH TISHREI

I asked for permission to splash the cash this week, so we're getting a taxi to Bratislava airport [BTS]! Not only that, but we're going extra legroom on our Ryanair flight to Milan Bergamo [BGY]. We have a bit of time in the stopover to see one of da Vinci's finest works, and then back on the plane to Humberto Delgado Airport [LIS] in Lisbon, and we have just enough left to get a taxi for the 40-minute drive to the Sintra palace high in the hills of Portugal...

Don Isaac Abrabanel was born in Portugal in 1437 into the illustrious Abrabanel family. There is a well-known dispute as to whether his name is 'Abarbanel' or 'Abrabanel' – in fact, there are 17 recorded different ways of spelling his name in the Latin alphabet! During the early 1960s, the spelling of 'Abarbanel' gained prominence owing to the release of a song by innovative and pioneering surf-rock band Shlock Rock, which utilised distinctive harmonies and counterpoint techniques. In 1965, this song was covered by the Beach Boys, who changed the name to 'Barbara Ann'; sadly, this version had a much better chart performance than the Shlock Rock original and so 'Abarbanel' is still largely unknown to wider audiences.



Initially, Abrabanel was treasurer to the King of Portugal and wielded significant political power. However, when the King died, his son forced Abrabanel to flee to Spain, where he in turn developed close ties with King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I of Spain. In 1492, unexpectedly, the infamous Alhambra edict forced Abrabanel to choose between converting to Christianity or being expelled from Spain, and so he and his family left, ending up eventually in Venice.

Abrabanel's exegetical style is renowned for its originality: he wrote far more extensive introductions to Biblical books than almost anyone before him, in which he discussed the overarching themes, ideas and style of the book. In his commentary, rather than pick up on certain words or phrases and raises as they appear, he writes a list of multiple questions at the beginning of each section

of text, and systematically answers them.

Abrabanel also had no qualms disagreeing with anyone and everyone when he believed that they were wrong. For example, he vehemently rejects philosophers such as Ralbag as heretics, and he even criticises the prophet Yirmiya's grammar. He saw himself as striving for the truth in what he saw as the *peshat* ('simple explanation') of the *Tanakh*, unafraid to say for example that certain verses in *Nakh* were added in by later editors, or that Christian exegetes had a better understanding of the *peshat* than the traditional Rabbinic interpretations. In some cases, he strongly agrees with Rambam, for example in his *Rosh Amanah*, in which he defends Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith from attacks by Albo and Crescas (other Jewish philosophers). On the other hand, in his commentary to Guide for the Perplexed, he criticises many of Rambam's philosophical positions.

One of the points of contention between Abrabanel and Rambam is the nature of prophetic experience. Due to Rambam's position of ontological binarism (meaning the physical and the spiritual are in two separate realms and do not overlap), any event that takes place involving and angel or prophecy must be in a dream state, where the intellect is freed of its physical bonds. Abrabanel strongly assails this position, accusing him of giving forced interpretations of explicit verses in order to accord with his philosophy. Abrabanel insists that where the 'plain sense of the text' indicates that an action took place, it did indeed take place (see Hoshea 1 for the context of this debate).

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **Lishmah**, our women's beit midrash programme, continues this Tuesday, 1st November!
- The **Yeshiva/Sem fair** is taking place at JFS on the 2nd November!
- London **Student Bet Midrash** continues on Thursday 3rd November!
- A Shabbaton for **Shevet Seenai** will be held at the London Bayit over **4th-5th November!** Sign up at bauk.org/shevet-shabbaton by Sunday!
- Bogrim are invited to the **Student Bet Midrash Shabbaton** in Alkham, Kent! Taking place over the **11th-13th November**, visit www.studentbetmidrash.co.uk for more details.

- **Winter Machane** applications are now open! To sign up and for more information, visit bauk.org/camps.
- **Winter Machane tafkidim** applications are now open! For junior tafkidim, visit bauk.org/junior-tafkid, for senior tafkidim, visit bauk.org/senior-tafkid
- A **cocktail evening for Manchester and Leeds Bnei Akiva parents** is taking place this Motzei Shabbat!

THE STUDENT BET MIDRASH SHABBATON

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11 -13 November 2022

Alkham, Kent

£35 for two nights all inclusive

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For more information, please contact Hannah Reuben at hreuben@theus.org.uk

LISHMAH **אור**

Bnei Akiva invites all Bogrot and sixth-form women to join our Lishmah Beit Midrash Programme!

What? Open Bet Midrash followed by a choice of Chaburot, led by educators and peers

Where? 2 Hallswelle Rd

When? Every Tuesday evening 8-10pm

Come and be part of this dynamic Makom Torah!

Contact chinuch@bauk.org for more info!

SHABBAT SEENAI

4&5 TH NOVEMBER

Year 13, lets spend an amazing shabbat together as a shevet while also having a great opportunity to hear more about our hachshara programmes!

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