

Lech Lecha 5779

BS"D Parashat Noach and Lech Lecha 5779

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Avram's Rainbow Connection

HaShem revealed to Noach that He would never again bring a flood to destroy all life, and the sign of the covenant would be the rainbow in the cloud. Why precisely a rainbow? And why did the start of Avram's ascent on the stage of history begin as an addendum at the end of Parashat Noach?

When we delve deeply into the spiritual, a surprising truth is revealed – interiors are less complex than the exteriors.

What characterizes the world of nature is the multitude of entities. There are an infinite number of types of inanimate objects, plants and living things. All the specks of sand on all the world's beaches do not come close to the number of stars in the two trillion galaxies in the heavens. When we examine the inner workings of the atomic universe, we discover that the particles that make up a steel rod are the same that make up the wings of a butterfly. What distinguishes between steel rods that can hold up a 100-story building and the delicate wings of a butterfly is nothing but the composition of the various molecules.

The pre-eminent physicist, Albert Einstein, discovered that the interior of matter is energy, which set off the Big Bang. The energy contracted and became matter, and it is possible to reverse the process and to restore the matter to its energy, as is done with the splitting of uranium in atomic blasts.

Similarly, in the spiritual world of the Jewish People, the inner reality is less complex than the outer reality, as was

made eminently clear in the Temple Service.

Kohanim in their Temple service wore four identical garments. This appearance hid the personal identities of each individual kohen. Likewise, no kohen could be linked to a particular task, because the tasks of the daily service were assigned according to daily morning lotteries.

Moreover, the obligation to portion tithes to kohanim blurred the difference among kohanim, because in terms of the Torah obligation, the required amount of Kohanic tithe was one kernel of wheat per crop of produce, without distinguishing between an ample crop and a stark one.

For the Levi'im, as opposed to the Kohanim, the Torah did not establish a uniform garment during their service. This emphasizes the independence and uniqueness of each Levi. A Levi was identified with the task that was earmarked for him in advance, and it was forbidden for him to change his task. A gatekeeper remained a gatekeeper and a singer remained a singer. Such was his task, and such was his identity. The gift that the Torah awarded the Levi was ten percent of the entire crop, such that unlike the case of the kohanim, the quantity of the tithe changed from one Levi to another according to the economic situation of the giver. All this served to emphasize the uniqueness of the individual Levi.

The Kohanic service was more enclosed than that of the Levites. Accordingly, the uniqueness of the kohen in the divine service was blurred compared to that of the particular Levi, whose uniqueness stood out amongst the rest of the Levites because the Levitic service was in exterior places in the Temple.

The rainbow in the cloud has an interior and exterior reality. The exterior reality finds expression in the seven primary colors, stretching from red to purple. Yet the combination of all the colors of the rainbow together nullifies the

uniqueness of each individual color and all of them together are transformed to simple, transparent light. Indeed, the interior is simple, and the exterior is complex.

The rainbow served to reveal to Noach and to the world that just as with the rainbow, so, too, HaShem's essence is totally invisible. Just as with the rainbow, where the seven primary colors are revealed when the sun's rays touch the tiny vapors of moisture, HaShem's commandments reveal themselves when the Divine Presence touches the holy Jewish soul.

That is the meaning of "Hear O Israel, HaShem is our HaShem. HaShem is one." The entire complex, external universe derives from the one single, invisible HaShem.

Avram is connected to Parashat Noach because the rainbow is addressed to him and to his descendants after him. The Jewish People were destined to give expression to the externality of HaShem through fulfillment of the 613 mitzvot that reflect that which is most invisible and that which is most interior – The Creator of the Universe.

In Parashat Lech Lecha, HaShem recalls to Avram that his holy soul, which will continue to exist in his descendants after him, will give expression to the externality of the Creator, but only in the Land of Israel. That is the basis for Ramban's determination (Vayikra 18:25) that the mitzvot were given to be fulfilled only in the Land of Israel. As for their fulfillment in the galut, that is only so that they will not be forgotten when we return to the Land of Israel. As the Prophet Yirmiyahu said (32:37-42):

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“See, I will gather them from all the lands to which I have banished them in My anger and wrath, and in great rage; and I will bring them back to this place and let them dwell secure. They shall be My people, and I will be their HaShem. I will give them a single heart and a single nature to revere Me for all time, and it shall be well with them and their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them and that I will treat them graciously. I will put into their hearts reverence for Me, so that they do not turn away from Me. I will delight in treating them graciously, and I will plant them in this land faithfully, with all My heart and soul. For thus said the Lord: As I have brought this terrible disaster upon this people, so am I going to bring upon them the vast good fortune which I have promised for them.”

Shabbat Shalom,

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