

# Noach 5778

BS"D Parashat Noach 5778

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

## The Rainbow's External & Internal Reality

The waters retreated and the ground began to restore its mantle of green, and the feeling that a new age had begun enveloped Noach and his family. But it was not a consummate joy, because in the back of his mind Noach harbored the fear that in the future there could be another deluge to destroy all mankind.

The Creator alleviated Noach's fears with an assurance that He would never again cover the earth with water as a punishment for man's evil deeds, and He decreed that the rainbow would forever serve as the symbol of this declaration.

The sign of the rainbow requires explanation. Most commentators on the Torah agree that the rainbow is not a new phenomenon but a natural result of sunlight's refraction off the tiny droplets of moisture when the sun is below 42 degrees over the horizon. So how does the rainbow serve as the symbol, and why did HaShem choose to appoint a common natural phenomenon to a new relationship between HaShem and Man?

In addition, I find it strange that the story of Avram begins in the parasha named Noach, creating the impression that Avram had a minor part in the story whose star was Noach.

I suggest.

As we delve more and more deeply into the internal essence of

any issue, be it material or spiritual, we find the details to be less diversified and less complex than what appears from its external trappings.

In nature, our world is distinguished by its many diversified flora and fauna – not to mention the “infinite” grains of sand on the world’s beaches. However, as we enter the internal world of atoms, we find that the atoms of a steel girder are identical to those which comprise the wings of a butterfly. The resulting difference between the all-powerful steel girder that supports 100 story buildings and the delicate, fragile wings of a butterfly is due to the number and configuration of the atoms within the molecules that comprise the chemical elements of our existence. And if we go back in time to the first Big Bang, the present belief among scientists based on Einstein’s teachings is that the essence of all the atoms and subatomic particles is “simple” energy produced by the “big bang” which – about one millionth of a second later – began to condense into matter.

The external appearances are a steel girder or butterfly wings. However, their internal makeup is the indistinguishable atom, and the atom’s internal essence is undivided simple energy.

In our spiritual world, this phenomenon appears in the Bet HaMikdash. Kohanim wore identical apparel of four pieces of clothing, making each kohen indistinguishable in appearance from his fellow Kohanim. In addition, the individual Kohen did not have a task specifically assigned to him, but was assigned his task by virtue of a daily drawing of lots. Also, the amount of terumah which the Torah requires to be given to the Kohen is one grain out of an entire crop, which again emphasizes the identical features of the Kohanim.

In contrast, levi'im had no specific uniform which would de-emphasize their individuality. Every levi had a task which was specific to him. A doorkeeper could not change his function to

be in the choir and vice versa. The tithe given to the levi was one tenth of the farmer's crop, which resulted in different amounts given to each levi.

The result of all this was that the levi's individuality was a perceived fact, whereas the kohen's individuality was minimized. The reason is that the kohen's service to God is more internal and hidden so his essence is less complex, whereas the levi's tasks are more external and hence more individualized.

The rainbow, too, has an external and internal reality.

The external one is perceived as its seven basic colors, ranging from red to violet, while the complete amalgam and consolidation of all the seven colors disappear into uniform transparent light. The external is detailed and complex; the internal is simple and homogeneous.

HaShem was informing Noach that He would produce an emanation from within the invisible, concealed, ethereal, imponderable, indiscernible, intangible, essence of Himself. The imperceptible One, so enclosed within Himself never to be disclosed but to Himself, more ethereal than light, would become perceptible to lowly Man in the form of the external 613 mitzvot of the Torah. The seven colors of the rainbow are perceived by the breakdown of light when it comes into contact with water droplets. The mitzvot are perceived when the Holy Spirit comes into contact with a Jewish neshama.

This is the essence of

שְׁמַיָּהוּ בֶן-יְהוֹנָדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּן-נְחֻמְיָהוּ

*Listen (understand) Yisrael, the God of the manifold forces of nature is essentially one ethereal entity*

HaShem informed Noach of His intention to bring into the world a holy people whose souls will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and will perceive the 613 desires of HaShem. The father of this nation will be Avraham, and that is why the saga of Avraham begins in the parasha of Noach. It is to inform us that HaShem's declaration never to destroy the world with water is dependent upon the degree that the Jewish people – the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov – will abide by their deepest instincts to serve God.

In parashat Lech Lecha, HaShem informs Avram that his unique neshama, which reflects HaShem's spirit into the 613 mitzvot, can do so only in Eretz Yisrael. This is the basis of the Ramban's (Vayikra 18:25) affirmation that the Torah was given to be kept in Eretz Yisrael, and what we keep of the mitzvot in the galut (based on a verse of the prophet Yirmiyahu) is in order not to forget how to keep them when we return to Eretz Yisrael.

The parasha relates the "brit" (covenant) which HaShem made with humanity never to bring a worldwide deluge. But what concerns us even more is that, in the course of history, HaShem made covenants specifically with the Jewish nation, one of which was declared by HaShem to the prophet Yirmiyahu (32:37-42):

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְחֵן וְלִרְחֻם עֵינִי וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְחֵן וְלִרְחֻם עֵינִי  
:וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְחֵן וְלִרְחֻם עֵינִי

:וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְחֵן וְלִרְחֻם עֵינִי

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְחֵן וְלִרְחֻם עֵינִי



Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5778/2017 Nachman Kahana