YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva**

**Parashat NOACH**

**SICHA OF HARAV BARUCH GIGI**

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In memory of Rabbi Jack Sable z”l and

Ambassador Yehuda Avner z”l

by Debbi and David Sable

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In memory of our beloved father, grandfather, and husband, Arthur Feldman, Eliyahu Henoch Ben Aharon Shlomo. May his *neshama* merit an *aliya*.
Adele Feldman, Sharon and Jonathan Levine and Family, Ilana and Howard Karesh and Family, Aviva and Dov Katz and Family.

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**The Flood and *Tikkun Olam***

Adapted by Aviad Herman

Translated by David Strauss

The end of the previous *parasha* and the beginning of our *parasha* describe the low point reached by the human race in the time of Noach:

And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord repented that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said: I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for I repent that I have made them… And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. (*Bereishit* 6:5-12)

This description raises a particularly disturbing question. Only five chapters earlier, an account was given of the creation of the world and of man. How did man succeed in corrupting his ways in such radical fashion in such a short period of time?

In order to answer this question we must clarify the foundations on which his creation was based, try to understand what caused him to deviate from the path that he was supposed to take, and examine how God repaired the situation in our *parasha.*

The creation of man presents two principles that can be deduced from God's blessing of man at the time of his creation:

And God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth. (*Bereishit* 1:28)

First, note should be taken of the difference between God's blessing of man and His blessing of the other living creatures. Whereas the other creatures are blessed by God and that is all, regarding man, the verb "and He said," is added. This verb expresses the first principle in the creation of man – the mutual connection between man and his Maker. This, however, is not the only principle that emerges from this verse. The mission that God places at man's doorstep – "and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth" – expresses the demand that man rule the natural world. He must serve as a leader who will guide the rest of creation to the good and positive districts that underlie it.

These two principles must merge into a single mission, in which man calls upon God and elevates the rest of creation with him as he makes that call. This mission is expressed in *Tehillim* 148, which is recited every morning in *Pesukei De-Zimra*:

*Halleluya*. Praise you the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise you Him, all His angels; praise you Him, all His hosts. Praise you Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light. Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for He commanded, and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which shall not be transgressed. Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea-monsters, and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind, fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle, creeping things and winged fowl; kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens, old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. And He has lifted up a horn for His people, a praise for all His pious men, even for the children of Israel, a people near to Him. *Halleluya*. (*Tehillim* 148:1-13)

The sin of the first man constituted a fall in relation to both layers of his creation. First, the very fact that the serpent causes the man to sin is contrary to the demand of man that he exercise dominion over the creation, for now it is the serpent that is leading man. Second, that same sin leads to a disintegration of the connection between the man and God. Man hides from God in the garden and fails to answer God's question, "Where are you?"

The situation continues to deteriorate until Noach's generation, when the relationship between human beings among themselves as well as the relationship between them and God reaches its lowest point – moral injustices and a lack of communication between God and man. This is why God deemed it necessary to wipe out the old creation.

But how did He bring about the repair of the new creation? The answer seems to be found in the renewed command of procreation:

And God blessed Noach and his sons and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all wherewith the ground teems, and upon all the fishes of the sea: into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be for food for you; as the green herb have I given you all. (*Bereishit* 9:1-3)

There is no longer any talk about man's exercising dominion over nature. Instead, the emphasis is placed on his status as superior to the rest of the creation. The animals must be in fear and dread of him, and in this way he will understand his role – not to sink to their level, but to raise them up to him.

The repair of the second layer, the spiritual layer, is found at the end of the *parasha*, in the account of the birth of Avraham. Avraham will call upon the name of the Lord, he will educate others to walk in the ways of God, and he will do everything in his power to bring creation closer to Him. This call stood at Avraham's doorstep, was passed down as an inheritance to his descendants, and stands now before us. Let us not ignore it. We must call upon the name of God in everything that we do and wherever we are.

[This *sicha* was delivered on Shabbat *Parashat Noach* 5777 (2016).]