

Mei Hashiloach Vol. I. Genesis - *Bereishith* - Noah

CRISIS

The first Izbicy Torah in the second Sidra deals with crisis because that's the theme of the entire chapter, dealing with a global catastrophe, The Deluge, and God's advice to Noah on how to protect himself and save the world.

True to the internal structure of the Mei Hashiloach, there is nothing in the Torah which is not both eternal and personal; this Sidra is no different. Each of us has to face the Flood, or some other form of catastrophe, from time to time. In a word, Crisis! Or, in dictionary terms, a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change. The Izbicy's phrase is a 'time of fury', or, 'any evil at large in the world'.

Noah and his Ark story are a paradigm of crisis management. The Izbicy's *chidush* - innovation is in showing how it applies throughout all time, in every crisis situation.

Before beginning, however, the Izbicy makes a point of mentioning that this advice applies only to those of us who are not fully evolved. For once a person has reached a certain state of enlightenment or perfection other rules apply, as we will read later. Jacob reached his perfection on the day he settled in Egypt. Moses reached his on the day of his death. Noah achieved his the moment he left the ark and resettled the Earth.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

These are the generations of Noah... Make yourself an ark of gopher wood, etc.

This is the meaning of the ark: God gave Noah advice and protection to survive until the time of fury passed. And so it is for everyone whose heart is not yet entirely pure. They can learn from here and take advice on how to remain safe, to hide and protect themselves from any evil at large in the world.

And thus the sages taught, It is written, 'The king has brought me unto his chambers,' (Cant 1:4) A parable: A king was sitting on his throne with all his ministers standing in his presence. His gaze turned to the one minister who was really beloved, the king grabbed him by the hand and drew him into his innermost chambers. So, too, the Holy Blessed One has brought Israel into His innermost chambers, something He has not done for any nationality or tongue. Thus it says, 'The king has brought me unto his chambers'. Another explanation of the verse is this. 'The king has brought me unto his chambers', just as the Holy Blessed One has rooms within rooms in His Torah, so too, Torah scholars each have their own private rooms within rooms inside their Torah. If you see trouble, pain and strife feeling its way towards you, run and hide within the rooms of Torah and the pain will immediately vanish. As it is written, 'Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.' (Isa. 26:20) That's why the full verse ends thus: 'The king has brought me unto his chambers - we will be happy and rejoice in you.' (Tana D'Bei Eliyahu - Rabbah: 6)

If a person runs into the inner rooms of Torah she gives him advice and ideas on how best to survive.

אלה תולדות נח וכו' עשה לך תבת עצי וכו'. ענין התיבה, שנתן הקב"ה עצה והגנה לנח עד שיעברו ימי הזעם, וכן לכל מי שלא נזדכך לכו עדיין יוכל ללמוד עצות איך יסתר עצמו ויגין בעדו מכל רע המתרגש בעולם, וכן אמרו

חז"ל הביאני המלך חדריו משל למלך שהיה יושב על כסאו והיו עבדיו עומדין לפניו ונתן עיניו במי שהיה אוהבו תפסו בידו והכניסו בחדרי חדרים שלו (כך הקב"ה הביא את ישראל לחדרי חדרים) מה שלא הביא לכל אומה ולשון לכך נאמר הביאני המלך חדריו. ד"א הביאני המלך חדריו כשם שיש להקב"ה חדרים בתורתו כך יש להם לתלמידי חכמים לכל אחד ואחד חדרים בתורתו ואם ראית שהיסורין ממשמשין ובאות עליך רוצ לחדרי ד"ת ומיד היסורין בורחין ממך שנא' לך עמי בא בחדריך וגו' (ישעיה כ"ו כ') לכך נאמר הביאני המלך חדריו נגילה ונשמחה בך [תנדבא"ר פ"ו] והיא נותנת לו עצה איך להנצל.

The Tana D'Bei Eliyahu uses 'rooms and innermost rooms' as a metaphor describing refuge from fury happening 'out there' in the world. The Izbicy connects the idea with the story of Noah and his ark, although Noah is not advised to run into the rooms of Torah, but rather is told to build a physical box of rooms made of wood. This is because Noah does not live in a Torah world, as the Izbicy explains later in this sedra when discussing the covenant God made with Noah and again later with Abraham. The covenant with Noah happens in the world of *Derech Eretz* - 'proper behavior' which comes before Torah. The advice we are being given here, on how to deal with crisis, also applies to the world of *Derech Eretz* - 'proper behavior'. But since we live in a world of Torah and the innermost rooms of Torah, the advice combines every area of endeavor, as we will read.

When we are faced with a challenge there are usually a variety of possible responses, appropriate and inappropriate, advised and ill-advised. We begin with a quote from the Gemara making clear what is inappropriate, because there are certain reactions almost guaranteed to make any bad situation worse.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The meaning of the ark is as we learn in the Talmud (Pesachim, 113b), There are three whom God loves:

- a.) He who does not rage,
- b.) He who does not get intoxicated,
- c.) He who does not insist on his rights.

וענין התיבה הוא עפ"י מה דאיתא בגמ' [פסחים קי"ג:] שלשה הקב"ה אוהבן מי שאינו כועס ואינו משתכר ומי שמעביר על מדותיו, [אינו מעמיד על מדותיו כצ"ל]

The 'triangle of self-obsession' as it is known in the innermost rooms of the 12 Step Programs, is laid out in plain language in this Izbicy Torah. When in crisis we tend to fall into recognizable patterns of thinking and behavior. The 'triangle', so-called, reflects our relationship to past, present and future. Instead of serenity in the present moment we are feeling rage. Instead of acceptance of the past we are feeling resentment, and instead of faith we are afraid of the future.

There's a big difference between anger and rage. Anger is the mechanism whereby the unconscious informs us that something about a situation we are in is wrong and requires our attention. That's the purpose of anger, just as the pain we experience in a finger that is touching a boiling kettle is the unconscious telling us that we are in danger of burning our flesh.

Rage is a mood and mind altering biochemical matrix involving all sorts of hormones and glandular secretions affecting the entire body and all its systems. Whether it has any benign, beneficial or positive features, this is certain, in times of crisis rage is a destructive and unhelpful measure to adopt. Rage is a failure to accept the present and the prevailing circumstances. Crises need our response, not our rejection or denial. If I become heated in my

anger, if my passion leads me to act itself out in any way, I will assuredly regret it.

People get high, drink to intoxication or medicate themselves into stupor because they are afraid, and they are afraid because they have no faith in God. They do not, no matter how vehemently they profess some type of faith, believe in Divine Providence. Failure to develop a 'working relationship' with God leads people into paths of self destructive addictions. It always manifests in some version of the same 'fear of the future' described here. In the big-book of Alcoholics Anonymous we read something very similar, in the list of 'Promises'.

"Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." (page 83-84)

If I am going to be any use to myself in a crisis I need to stay sober, clear-headed and capable of rational assessments and distinctions. It's only when I throw my hands up in despair that I reach for the mood and mind altering substance or behavior; it is when I have given up hope that I invariably do the very thing guaranteed to bring destruction crashing down on my own head. I must develop a positive attitude to the future to replace my fear.

Nothing prevents us enjoying Light and Life as much as resentments. They poison our relationship to our own past. It is impossible to feel joy, freedom or optimism if we are bogged down in resentment at someone, something or someplace. Nothing spiritual or lasting can be built on foundations undermined by resentments, nothing. If my feelings lead me to insist on settling every score, repaying every hurt with hurt and demanding restitution for every wrong done to me, I cannot move forward and am stuck. In a crisis being stuck is dangerous and extremely unproductive.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

- a.) One who does not rage means someone who never acts out his rage in a physical way.
- b.) Does not get intoxicated refers to someone with serenity, who recognizes and has faith in the Creator of the world.
- c.) One who does not insist on his rights is someone who renounces anger in his heart, and makes sure he never has resentment against his friend, even in his heart.

מי שאינו כועס היינו שאינו מראה שום כעס בפועל, ואיננו משתכר היינו שיש לו ישוב הדעת ומכיר ומאמין בבורא עולם, ומי שמעביר על מדותיו היינו שמסיר הכעס גם מלבו שלא יהיה בלבו שום תרעומות על חברו.

In order to avoid acting out our rage in a moment of weakness or vulnerability, we need to have a mechanism or system already in place before the crisis hits. The metaphor is the Ark itself, made of material impervious to rage, capable of containing it. Something Noah spent many, many years building before the rains began falling, i.e. before the crisis hit. He already had the ark in place. We have to do the same somehow.

Noah does not get told to make an ark. The exact wording is, 'Make yourself an ark.'

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

And it is at these three that the ark hints. **Make yourself an ark of Gopher wood** means do not rage. The Hebrew word *Gopher* is akin to the word for Sulfur - *Gofrit*. Sulfur is a metaphor for rage. This is why the Torah says, make yourself a box of Gopher wood, meaning contain your anger to ensure you don't act out your rage in a physical way.

ועל אלו השלשה מרמזו התיבה, עשה לך תיבת עצי גופר היינו שלא תכעוס, כי גפרית מורה על כעס וזה עשה לך תיבת עצי גופר היינו שתסגור את הכעס ולא תכעוס בפועל.

In order to avoid panic and despair we need an almost military style orderliness of mind and spirit. In times of great stress it is crucial to already have habits of discipline and standardized methods of response in place. Military training is essential a method whereby normal young men can be taught to have abnormal responses to stimuli that would induce bowel-loosening terror and flight in normal people. Its ultimate aim is to manipulate the young soldier into a state of cool-headedness under fire and other conditions of extreme threat.

This Torah teaches that all escape mechanisms are counter productive at stressful moments. Composure is key. Flight is as self destructive as intoxication. A healthy person needs a methodical behavior to cope with crisis; needs to be able to compartmentalize.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Make the ark into compartments means do not become intoxicated but remain serene. The Hebrew word for compartments is *qinim*, these are cells, nests or compartments. Because someone who has many cells or compartments, needs to maintain serenity of mind in order to remember the location and use of each of the cells. The Mishnaic tractate of *Qinim* (dealing with pairs of sacrificial turtledoves) also hints at this, and therefore, someone without serenity and a pure heart can never truly understand the depth of the Torah to be found in the tractate of *Qinim*.

קינים תעשה את התיבה היינו שלא תשתכר רק תהא בישוב הדעת, כי קינים הוא חדרים כמו מי שיש לו חדרים הרבה צריך שיהיה לו ישוב הדעת לידע מקום כל חדר ותשמישו, וגם מסכת קנים מורה ע"ז ולכן מי שאין לו ישוב הדעת ולב טהור אינו מבין לאמתם את עומק ד"ת הנמצא במס' קנים.

Letting go resentments to the nth degree. Scraping away at the layers of indignation and rancor left at the site of an injury or insult someone did to me in the past. Not merely to forgive but to forget completely, as though it never happened. To erase the insult or injury without any input or stimulus from the person who injured or insulted me, without them apologizing or showing remorse. To cleanse the Self of resentment. The secret is the Hebrew word root, **כפר** *Kopher*. It carries many meanings: Ransom. Atonement. Forgiveness. Cleansing. A village. A heretic or denier.

It is as though the verse we are about to read instructs Noah to Cleans with Cleansing. The Izbicy uses a Hebraism that is very difficult to translate. I have translated the phrase as, 'not insisting on exercising ones rights'. But it may be worth looking at the Hebrew original. **אינו מעמיד על מדותיו** - *Aino Mamid Al Midotav* - Someone who does not stand on his degree. Does not always insist on being accorded all the honors due to him, does not always expect a full measure of respect, recompense or revenge. In the prologues to the Midrash of Lamentations Rabbah we encounter a rabbinical paradigm of this genre. It boils down to this. One party says, "I am aggrieved, I have been sorely used, I am the injured party." To which the reply comes, swift and pithy. "So, what? Get over it!" To which there is not adequate response other than a rueful acknowledgement.

We read: Rachel jumped to intercede with God. She said, 'God, You know how passionately Jacob, Your servant, loved me. He paid my father with seven years of labor for me. And when those seven years of work were completed and it came time for me to be

married to my husband my father conspired to swap my sister in place of me. I found that very hard to bear. I knew what was happening, so I informed my husband of the plan and gave him a sign whereby he might distinguish me from my sister so that my father would be unable to substitute her for me. Subsequently I regretted the plans I'd made. I suppressed my personal erotic desires and felt compassion for my sister who would be exposed and disgraced. That evening when they swapped my sister in my place for my husband, I gave her all the signs I'd given my husband so that he would think she is Rachel. And, what's more, I hid beneath the bed where he lay with my sister and when he spoke to her she remained silent; it was I who spoke and replied to everything he said. This is how I treated my sister, with loving kindness, without jealousy toward her, so that she not be shamed and disgraced. And if I, of flesh and blood, of dust and ashes, can contain my jealousy of the rival, of the other wife, not to cause her shame and disgrace, then You, O Living, Eternal, Merciful King, how can You be jealous of pagan worship wherein nothing is real anyway? You've exiled my children who have been put to the sword, and their enemies do as they wish with them'

Immediately God's compassion begins to manifest. He says, 'For your sake, Rachel I will bring Israel back to their proper place.' So, it is written, 'Thus says the LORD, "A voice is heard on high, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; etc." Thus says the LORD: Restrain your voice from weeping [...] There is a reward for your work.' (Lam. Rabbah Prol. 24)

Basically, Rachel tells God to get over it, to lighten up and, in modern parlance, Chill! God agrees to do so, precisely because He is the One who is *Maavir Al Midotav* - Does not insist on His rights, does not even insist on being right, does not always feel the compulsion to argue every point to the death.

To get some idea of how important this concept is in rabbinical literature, the source text is here, in the Talmud: It was taught, R. Ishmael b. Elisha said, 'Once I entered to offer incense into the innermost inside chamber, when I beheld AKATHRIEL-YAH-TZEBAOTH, sitting on the most high and glorious throne. "Bless me, Ishmael, my son," He said.

I responded thus, "May it be Your will that Your compassion conquer Your anger, that Your mercy override Your degrees, that You treat your children with the degree of mercy and convene with them without insisting upon the letter of the law." God nodded to me with His head.' (Berachot 7a)

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Cover it on the inside and outside with pitch. This means not to insist on exercising your rights. The root of the Hebrew word for both Cover and Pitch is the same - *Kopher*. It is synonymous with *Kapparah* - Cleansing and Atonement. Because you have to cleanse it from the depths of your heart, that there remain in your heart not the least or slightest impression of anger against your friend.

וכפרת אותה מבית ומחוץ בכופר, היינו שתעבור על מדותיך, כי וכפרת היינו שתכפר מעומק לבך, שלא ישאר בלבך רושם מכעס על חברך.

Everything we have said this far, about creating a safe place to take refuge in time of crisis, depends on honesty. I remember Rabbi Doctor A. J. Twerski MD sharing a humorous insight he learned during the course of his many years dealing with addicts and their addictions. An old-timer in recovery asked him. "Doctor, would you like to know the secret of when an alcoholic is lying, how tell if he's telling the truth or not?"

"Wow," replied the doctor. "That sure would be a useful skill to have when dealing with addicts and alcoholics. Yes. The answer is yes, I would like to know."

“Well, what yer does is this,” confided the old-timer. “Yer looks carefully, see, and yer watches the lips. If the lips is movin’ the alcoholic’s lyin’.”

Basing my assumptions wholly on the juxtaposition of these polemics against intoxication and the focus on not lying, I suspect that the Izbicy had some close encounters with alcoholics, too. There certainly were some rather infamous Jewish ones in the Lublin neighborhood, around the period in history covered by the main characters in the P’shischa narrative.

R’ Yaakov Yitzchak of P’shischa, known as the Yid HaKadosh, (rebbe of the Rebbe Reb Bunim who was the rebbe of the Izbicy) was a follower of the Holy Seer, the Chozeh of Lublin. Once, the Chozeh saw the Holy Yid dressed in torn clothing, (the Yid made a point of owning next to nothing) and took one of his own shirts and gave to him. “Dispose of that Shmatte,” he said. “It’s not proper for a Torah scholar to dress like a homeless vagabond or beggar. The halacha forbids it explicitly.” The Yid decided to go to the mikveh before putting on his rebbe’s shirt. In the mikveh he found the City-Drunk going through the DTs. He was in a pretty bad way, in withdrawal from alcohol; shivering, shaking and suffering delirium tremens. not a pretty sight.

“Can’t you help me out at all?” the poor sick and suffering alcoholic begged. “Not even with the price of a drink?”

But the Holy Yid really was as broke as the Ten Commandments, it wasn’t an act. He didn’t have the price of a drink anywhere about his person. However, he had a brilliant idea. He gave the poor Shikker the shirt the Lubliner had just given him, with the advice, “Don’t let this shirt go for less than four rubles, it’s the holy Lubliner’s own shirt. You tell them, you’re not just selling it for the price of one drink.”

The drunk was as grateful as anything, but, he wasn’t born yesterday. “Who’s going to believe me about the shirt?” he complained. “I’m the Lubliner Shikker. I lie as smooth and as fast as a dose of liquid paraffin through a large intestine. This shirt is useless to me unless you, yourself, as a known disciple of the Chozeh, will stand with me in the marketplace and vouch for the provenance of the shirt.”

And so it was that the marketplace of Lublin delighted in the spectacle of the Yid Hakadosh hawking the Lubliner’s shirt for a bottle of booze to feed the town drunk. Needless to say, the Lubliner was not a bit pleased when the story came to his ears. Not one bit. “When you do things like that, you shame me,” he told the Yid.

There is a question which comes up, for me, though, about the meaning and definition of truth. If, for each of us, there is just one, single definition of the truth coming out of our mouths, and there is no half truth or semi, maybe, perhaps under certain circumstances, sort of, kinda like the truth type of thing; how do we explain the Torah’s description of fluid truth telling, as in the following:

Jacob told Rachel, ‘I am your father’s brother - *in trickery*.’

The sages asked, is it proper for a righteous man to be so proficient at cheating and trickery? Yes, they responded, it is written, ‘With the pure, be pure, and with the devious, be perverse.’ (II Samuel 22:27) (*Bava Batra* 123a)

Now, I ask you, if truth cannot be fudged, and if honesty only has a single definition, how did Jacob become the paradigm of Truth-Telling, as it is written, ‘Give truth to Jacob,’ (Micha 7:20) from which the sages in various places derive the teaching that Jacob represents Truth?

If truth is flexible and fluid, if lying to a cheat is not like telling a blatant untruth, who’s to say what’s true and what’s a lie? Why do we revere as a paradigm of truth, the man, Jacob, who was Laban’s brother in trickery?

It matters here, because the Izbicy stresses that the whole architecture of the ark, our refuge in times of crisis, depends on the truth. That the spiritual dimensions of truth are the

actual physical dimensions of the length, breadth and height of the ark.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

The dimensions of the ark in the Hebrew Gematria - numerical value comprise the word *Lashon* - Tongue.

- a.) 300 cubits length is the letter SHIN = 300.
- b.) 50 cubits width, is the letter NUN = 50.
- c.) 30 cubits height is the letter LAMED = 30.

What this means for us is that we must not have tongue speaking falsehood.

והשעורין מהתיבה הם אותיות לשון, ג' מאות אורך וחמשים רוחב ושלשים קומה, (של"ן) והיינו שלא יהיה לך לשון שקר.

The Izbicy is not done with his championship of the truth and the crucial role it plays in forming a safe zone where one may weather a crisis. He takes it to the next level. When the Torah commands us to love God with all our heart, soul and might, anything short of the whole truth will disqualify our love. Love and truth are woven of the same threads into the very same fabric.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

These dimensions also refer to the commandment to 'worship God with all you heart, all your soul and all your might'.

- a.) 30 cubits in height, which is the LAMED, corresponds to 'all your heart', which word, LEV begins with the LAMED.
- b.) 50 cubits width, the letter NUN corresponding to 'all your soul', which word, NEFESH begins with a NUN.
- c.) 300 cubits in length, the SHIN corresponds to 'all your might', because Might means all the power at your disposal; with absolutely everything you have - to the last ounce and drop.

And that is signified by the letter SHIN, since the letter SHIN is really the last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. (the letter TAV which follows SHIN is a mystery, set aside for the world to come) That's why whenever the sages wanted to exaggerate, they did so using the number 300 as we learn in the Talmud, an ant was so industrious it collected 300 bushels of seed; (Chulin 90b) so great was the volume of gold donated to the Temple that 300 priests were employed to move it about. (Midot 3:8)

וגם אלו השעורין הם נגד בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאורך, למ"ד אמות גובה כנגד בכל לבבך, נו"ן רוחב נגד בכל נפשך ושי"ן מאות אורך נגד בכל מאורך, כי מאד היינו בכל מה שיוכל האדם לשער בדעתו ולהוסיף, וע"ז רומז אות השי"ן כי השי"ן היא אחרונה שבא"ב כי סוד הת' הוא כמוס לעוה"ב ולכן בכל מקום שרצו חכמים לגזום גזמו כשלוש מאות כמו [חולין צ':] ג' מאות כור, וג' מאות כהנים שבמס' מדות פ"ג מ"ח.

Now, just hold on there, a minute. What are we saying; make sure to guard your tongue from lying, as your life may depend on it, but exaggeration is fine, no worries, go right ahead?

This is an Izbicy Torah. Abraham spent his life working through all sorts of love, until

he was quite sure that he loved no-one but God Almighty. He was always afraid to love anyone or anything, in case it impinged somehow or implicated or denigrated his love for God. But Abraham was not afraid of fear. When he felt fear he did not immediately began questioning his own authenticity, the way he did as soon as feelings of love arose in him.

Isaac spent his life working through all sorts of fear, until he was quite sure that he was afraid of no one but God Almighty. He was always afraid to be afraid of anything or anyone, in case it impinged somehow on, implicated or denigrated his fear of God. But Isaac was not afraid to love. When he felt love he did not immediately begin questioning his own authenticity, the way he did when feelings of fear arose in him.

Of the three patriarchs, Jacob is the choice or chosen one, why? Because Abraham and Isaac made God their focus, in love or in awe, God was the center of everything. Abraham is always asking, How real is my love for God? While Isaac is always asking, How real is my fear of God? But Jacob is always asking himself, How real am I?

Jacob's challenge is much, much harder than that of his father or grandfather.

Abraham asks himself, "Am I feeling love for Ishmael, or is this perhaps just some instinctual genetic predisposition to maintain certain levels of attachment to one's offspring in order to ensure the success of my genes, to offer them the best chance of surviving. Perhaps I only think I love him because of some sensation my body provides me. How do I know that these are genuine emotions reflecting the spiritual values I am capable of?"

Isaac asks himself, "Am I afraid of pain, loss, punishment or abandonment, when I see the direction Esau is headed, are my fears about something he may do to hurt me, his mother or sibling, or is my feeling of fear awareness of the imminence of God?"

Extrapolating on the Izbicy's explanation of the missions of the first two patriarchs, this is how I understand Jacob's search for authenticity. Jacob spent his life working through the truth of his relationship with God, the truth of God and the truth of Jacob. He treated Truth with suspicion because he was always afraid in case the 'truth' was not in fact true. He never knew for sure what was 100%, it was never made clear to him. His prophecies were always open to interpretation and counter interpretation. He quotes God's own words back to God in the form of questions, as though to say, "I know what you said to me, God, but I don't know if it means what I thought You said it means." In the same way that Abraham was not afraid of fear and Isaac was not afraid of love, Jacob was not afraid of lying. Lies were no secrets, cheating held no mysteries. It was 'truth' that scared Jacob to bits, because he could never be certain he wasn't lying to himself, never be quite sure he was wasn't deluded.

There are times and people with whom truth and truth telling is a losing proposition. In Laban's world lie like a Laban.

But when you think it's time to tell the truth, don't fool yourself into thinking your lies are true. If you lie to yourself you will have no safe place to take refuge.

Now, adds the Izbicy, if your words are where and how you create a safe place, you need to let God into your speech, or else you'll remain in the dark.

Here it's worth noting that after the Ba'al Shem Tov added his insights to our repository of Torah none of us have ever been able to learn the Noah's Ark story the same old way, again. The Ba'al Shem said this. The Hebrew word *Teva*, which we translate as Ark, means Word in rabbinic literature. The next verse now reads, 'Make a skylight for your word', or allow divine light to permeate everything you say. This novel reading by the Ba'al Shem has filtered down through the writing of his descendents, disciples and followers, with new insights into his insight being added, to this day.

Let God dwell inside every word you utter from your mouth. Use every word you utter as a window to look from end of the world to the other.

Over the last 250 years there have been countless expositions explaining what the Ba'al Shem Tov may have meant with his cryptic remark. What follows is the Izbicy's addition to that

body of work, in the context of his reading of this entire Noah's Ark narrative as a personal journey.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Make a skylight for the ark. Be aware that everything is in the hands of heaven, because the skylight hints at clarity and knowledge.

צוהר תעשה לתיבה, היינו שתדע כי הכל בידי שמים, כי צוהר היינו בהירות וידיעה.

No sentence in Izbicy Torah is more laden with subtext than this one, 'Everything is in the hands of heaven'. The Gemara says, 'Everything is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven.' (Berachoth 33b) The Izbicy deals with this Talmudic dictum in a very peremptory manner. "That's just how humans interpret their reality," he says. "That's the way it looks, but the truth is the opposite." (Mei Hashiloach Vayera)

Nowhere internal is safe if you feel you are operating on will power alone. If you don't feel God holding the rudder of your life, you need to open a window and let some light in on the situation. There are things you need to know.

Next, we are told, a person can be greedy in many areas of life. It's not only physical things we crave and lust after. We can be just as demanding and insatiable emotionally and spiritually as we are bodily. If we are in crisis, it is time to contain ourselves, to lessen our intake of all things, to reduce our intake.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Finish it to a cubit on top meaning to be restrained whenever receiving the flow of abundance, so as not to be a glutton.

ואל אמה תכלנה מלמעלה, היינו שתצמצם בכל קבלות השפעה שלא תהיה רעבתן.

The next piece of advice runs as counter to common knowledge as did the previous reading about free-will. First the Izbicy brings the Midrashic teaching about pursuing peacemaking in order to make peace. But we are dealing with crisis, and the normal rules of behavior don't necessarily apply, across the board. We have to know when to make exceptions for our own safety.

Our words have to open us to peacemaking. The words we utter have to leave an opening for making peace, even with those are our enemies, we cannot shut ourselves off from peace overtures. The question is this; how far do I have to reach out to my enemy to make peace, how far and how wide?

The Izbicy explains why the Torah tells Noah to put the door of the ark on the side. Why should it matter where Noah put the door of the ark, what difference does it make to us, what can we learn from it?

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

And make the ark's door in its side. As was said in the midrash on the verse, 'Seek peace and pursue it.' (Ps. 34:15): Generally speaking, we are not obliged to go chasing after

Commandments to perform them. As we read often in the Torah, 'If you come across a bird's nest...' 'If you walk in your neighbor's field...' 'When you harvest your grapes...' etc. When the opportunity arises take it, but you don't have to go forcibly looking to make the opportunity happen. Not so when it comes to peace. About peace the verse says, 'Seek peace and pursue it.' Seek it where you are and go chasing it from somewhere else. (Num. Rabbah 19:16)

The midrash means to say the following; if it within your power to facilitate the peacemaking process, do so. Never put any obstacles in the way of peace, don't be the barrier to peace.

But to go pursuing your friend trying to get close to him, is not always the best course of action. It isn't always necessary or proper, because, after the dispute, there may remain some doubt about your friend's place in your life; perhaps your friend doesn't belong in your house? Of course, rejecting him outright if he comes to you trying to make peace, is incorrect and improper. That's why the Torah tells us to put the door in the side, and not out in front like an advertisement.

ופתח התיבה בצדה תשים, היינו כמו שמבואר על פסוק בקש שלום ורדפהו [תהלים ל"ד, ט"ו] וכמו דאיתא במדרש בקש שלום ממקומך ורדפהו ממקום אחר [במדבר רבה פרשה י"ט, ט"ו] היינו מצדך ומכחך לא יהיה שום מניעה לשלום, אך גם לרדוף אחר חבירו לקרב את עצמו לחבירו גם זאת אין מהצורך כי בכל דבר נמצא ספק כי יכול להיות שזה אינו ראוי לבא אל ביתך, אך לדחותו ג"כ אינו ראוי, וזה פי' בצדה תשים לא בפירסום.

Now we learn about talking to people - how to relate to different character types, to those we have to interact with but whom we know to be unsafe. To those who are friendly but not completely trustworthy, and finally, with those who resemble us in character and spirit.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Make a lower, second and third deck. Noah had to be taught how to treat his three sons, each according to his level;

- a.) With Ham at his level, the lowest level; speak with him always showing him only your outside face.
- b.) With Japheth, the second level.
- c.) With Shem at the third level, meaning, speak to him from the depth of your heart and reveal all your secrets to him.

תחתיים שניים ושלישם תעשה, היינו שנצטוו נח לידע איך להתנהג עם ג' בניו בכל אחד לפי מדרגתו, עם חם כפי מדרגתו היינו תחתיים שתדבר עמו רק לפנים ועם יפת שניים ועם שם שלישים, היינו שתדבר עמו מעומק הלב וכל סודותיך תגלה לו.

The Hebrew word for lowest level, *Tachtuyim* - is dismissive. Ham is Noah's son and has to be talked to. But a person needs to know when to refrain from investing intimacy in the conversation.

The Hebrew word for second level, *Shneeyim* - hints at sharpness and content. Teaching Torah is sometimes referred to as Mishna, whose root is identical to Shneeyim. It is not a dismissive word, at all.

The Hebrew word for third level, *Shelishim* - is very inclusive and complimentary. Tripartite constructs are crucial to the way Judaism sees the world. All strong, beautiful and

permanent structures are made of three components.

Now the Izbicy wraps up the Torah, qualifying everything, as though to say, 'That was all true in particular circumstances. But there are certain conditions when the opposite of everything we said this far is also true.'

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

All this was advice to Noah before the flood, before he reached his wholeness, perfection and enlightenment. It was about him learning how to hide himself. Immediately upon leaving the ark, which is when Noah achieved wholeness, he did the exact opposite of these things, as it is written, 'He drank and was intoxicated.' Subsequently he became enraged at his son, Ham, and, finally, refused to overlook his rights, and insisted on punishing Ham. q

For when a person is whole he can do as he wishes, expanding instead of contracting, opening up instead of closing down, for then his will is congruent with the will of God.

וכל זה היה עצות לנח קודם שנשלם איך יסתיר עצמו, כי מיד כשיצא מן התיבה שאז היה השלמתו אז עשה היפך מאלו הדברים כמ"ש וישת וישכר וכעס על חם ולא עבר על מדותיו, כי כשאדם נשלם אז מותר להתפשט, כי אז הכל רצון ה'.

The Second Torah

He sent out the raven and it went out, back and forth, etc.

The raven hints at rage. And it was Noah's desire that the characteristic of rage be gone from the world. But God showed him that for the time being there is still need for rage in the world, because rage can be used against lust. For when there comes upon a person an evil desire, sometimes he can save himself by putting himself into a rage.

וישלח את הערב ויצא יצוא ושוב וכו'. עורב רומז על כעס ונח רצה שלא ימצא מדות הכעס בעולם והראה לו הקב"ה כי לעת עתה עוד מהצורך במדה זאת בעולם, כי לפעמים נגד תאוה שיבא לאדם איזה תאוה רעה, יוכל להנצל עצמו ע"י שיכנס עצמו בכעס,

And this is the meaning of the verse that the raven went out, to and fro, "until the waters dried," meaning until the evil desires leave the world, whereupon the rage will also disappear from the world, because water is a metaphor for desire. And that is why in the Temple in Jerusalem, where there was a small beginning of this process, there is a hint of it, for there was a square cubit there called "Raven's End" as we learn in the Mishnah of Midot (4:6).

וזה פי' ויצא יצוא ושוב עד יבושת המים היינו עד שיכלו חמדות רעות מהעולם אז יבוטל גם כעס כי מים היינו חמדה, ולכן במקדש התחיל מעט רמוז ע"ז שהיה שם אמה כליא עורב כדאיתא במס' מדות פ"ד מ"ו.

The third Izbicy Torah, this week, deals with the things we know without knowing how we know them. On some level we are all prophets because the divine is in us, and we are a part of God. Or, to phrase it more elegantly, that part of us which is really 'us' and not merely a function of the brain monitoring itself, is God in us.

Human self awareness is not proof of God, the brain merely observes itself observing itself. But consciousness of one's Freedom, of Grace, of Faith and Acceptance, those are real knowing.

'We know God because we are shown our true selves,' says the Izbicy, and takes it a step further. 'We know what God is thinking, right now, because we know how we feel, right now.'

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

God said to Himself, "Never again will I continue to curse the Earth for the sake of ..." etc.
God's thought, was known to Noah.

ויאמר ה' אל לבו לא אסף לקלל עוד את האדמה בעבור וכו'. הנה זאת מחשבת הש"י נודע לנח,

How does Noah know what God is thinking? The verse says that God said to Himself. How does anyone know what God says to Himself? The answer is simple - whatever thoughts and feelings overwhelm us, those are God's thoughts and feelings.

***** Mei Hashiloach Text *****

Because Noah found tremendous fear implanted in his own heart after the flood. Something inside him had changed; he no longer felt it was proper for a person to allow himself complete freedom of expansion, to let go all restraint and spread into every desire. To the contrary, he felt, for the first time in his life, that a person needs boundaries to his own spirit, a sense that not every thing should be done just because it can be done.

He extrapolated from his own sense of what was newly proper that it was God who had come to this conclusion. That he, Noah, was merely feeling and thinking an echo of the will of God, who had decided to refrain forever from cursing the Earth.

מאחר שנטבע בלבו גודל יראה אחר המבול, שלא נכון לפני האדם להתפשט את עצמו כפי רצונו ורק צריך לעצור את רוחו, מזה הבין כי כן הוא ג"כ רצון הש"י שלא יקלל עוד את האדמה.

When I bring clouds over the Earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds.

The cloud refers to fear and concealment. And the rainbow refers to confidence and self-assuredness. For even in the times of the greatest fear, a person needs to have great faith. This is what God promised Noah. And this is what the Zohar means (Vol. I, 72b) "Do not look for the footsteps of the Messiah until you see the rainbow in brilliant colors" meaning that the God-given confidence be obvious and apparent in front of your eyes, only then you can look for the footsteps of the Messiah.

והיה בענני ענן על הארץ ונראתה הקשת בענן. ענן היינו יראה והסתר, וקשת היינו מבטח עוז, כי בכל תוקף היראה יהיה לך בטחון גדול וזאת הבטיח הקב"ה לנח. וזה שנאמר בזוה"ק [בראשית ע"ב:] לא תצפה לרגלי דמשיחא עד דתחזי קשתא בגוונין נהורין, היינו שיהיה התקופות מהש"י בולט ומפורש נגד עיניך אז תצפה לרגלי משיחא,

This was the meaning of the question R. Shimon b. Yochai asked of R. Yehoshua Ben Levi

(Ketuboth 77b) “Has the rainbow been seen in your time?” he did not ask him “Did you see the rainbow”, but rather “Has it been seen” meaning, has it been seen *occasionally* and not permanently. For R. Shimon b. Yochai the rainbow was permanent. The rainbow and confidence of the Jewish people is the verse “Shma Yisrael, Hear O Israel”, which puts confidence into the heart of all those who wait upon His loving kindness.

וזה ששאל רשב"י את ריב"ל [כתובות ע"ז:] נראתה הקשת בימך ולא שאל אותו בלשון ראית, דנראתה משמע לפעמים ולא בתמידות. ולרשב"י היתה הקשת בתמידות. והקשת והתקופות של ישראל הוא הפרשה שמע ישראל שהוא נותן תקופות בלב המיחלים לחסדו.

And all the world shared the same speech and uniform words.

The verse does not use the word Language because when language is unspecified in the Torah, the assumption is that it is the Holy Tongue, which is what comes naturally from the depths of the heart and flows from the source of Life. All the other languages are called mocking-tongues, as it is written (Isaiah 33:19) a mocking language without *Binah* - Understanding, for they are not rooted in the source of Life in the person's heart. Because *Binah* - Understanding always refers to the heart.

ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים. ולא נאמר לשון אחד, כי עיקר לשון הוא לשון הקודש כי לשון הקודש הוא ממה שנטבע בעומק הלב ונובע משורש החיים, ושאר הלשונות נקראים לשון עלגים וכמ"ש [ישע' ל"ג י"ט] נלעג לשון אין בינה, היינו שאין לו שורש חיים בלבו כי בינה הוא בלב,

Now, the Generation of the Dispersal, although they spoke the Holy Tongue nevertheless they were not rooted in the Life force, it was only from the lips outwards that they spoke the Holy Tongue. Not much different from the twittering and whistling of birds and other creatures.

ודור הפלגה אף שדברו בלשון הקודש מ"מ לא הי' להם שורש חיים רק מן השפה ולחוץ היו מדברים בה, כמו פטפט וציפצוף העופות ושאר ב"ח,

This explains the story of the snake in the Garden of Eden, about which the commentators ask the following question. Why do we not read that when God cursed the snake He removed its faculty of speech. But the truth is that the snake, at its source, never possessed language, else it could not have spoken evil - *Lashon Hara* against its Creator. Understand this.

וכן בענין הנחש שהקשו כל המפרשי' למה לא מצאנו בקללתו שיוטל ממנו לשונו, אך באמת לא הי' לו לשון בשורש מאחר שדיבר לה"ר על בוראו. והבן

In describing the ten generations from Adam to Noah the Torah repeats the same phrase over and over. *X lived so many years, and begat a son, and named him Y. The days of X after he became the father of Y were so many years, and he became the father of sons and daughters. All the days that X lived were so many, then he died.*

בעשרה דורות שמאדם ועד נח נאמר אצל אל אחד ויחי כו' ויהי כלל ימי כו'

When describing the ten generations from Noah to Abraham however, the Torah only uses the

phrases, *X lived so many years, and begat a son, and named him Y. The days of X after he became the father of Y were so many years, and he became the father of sons and daughters,* but does not use the phrase, *All the days that X lived were so many, then he died.*

ובעשרה דורות שמנח עד אברהם לא נאמר ויהי כל ימי.

The reason can be explained with the verse (Proverbs 23:24) The father of the saintly child will greatly rejoice; and he that begets a wise son will delight in him.

Now, the verse does not use the word father to describe the begetter of the wise son as it did when talking of the tzadik - saintly child, calling him the father of the tzadik.

הענין בזה הוא ע"פ פסוק [משלי כ"ג כ"ד] גיל יגיל אבי צדיק ויולד חכם ישמח בו, ולא נאמר אבי אצל חכם כמו שנאמר אצל צדיק אבי צדיק.

The reason is as follows. When a parent has a saintly child then the parent also has some connection to the saintliness of the child, because that level sanctity is present in the parent as well, even if it is hidden from sight in the parent and becomes manifest only in the child.

אך הענין הוא כך כשנולד להאדם בן צדיק אז גם האב שייך בו כי גם בהאב נמצא המדריגה הזאת בהצנע רק אצל הבן היא בפועל.

But when a wise child is born; wise, meaning Wise in Torah, then there has been a completely new and fresh birth, and there is no connection between the parent and the child for it is something new. That's why the verse does not say, Father of the wise son will delight in him. Because there is no closer connection between father and son in this case, than between the son and everyone else in the world.

אבל כשנולד לו בן חכם היינו בד"ת אז הוא הולדה חדשה ואין שום שייכות להאב אצל הבן כי הוא דבר חדש. ע"כ לא נאמר אצל החכם ישמח האב כי אין שייכות להאב אצלו יותר מכל העולם

And so the verse says, Who begets the wise son will rejoice in him because the whole world rejoices in him. They no longer busy themselves studying the father but now they study him, for when a wise son is born, wise in the Torah, the entire world rejoices and busies itself studying the son and not the father.

ורק כתיב ישמח בו היינו כל העולם ישמחו בו ולא יעסקו עוד באביו רק בו. כי נולד חכם בד"ת ואז כל העולם בשמחה ויעסקו בהבן ולא בהאב.

That's why the ten generations from Adam to Noah are described with the coda, *All the days that X lived were so many, then he died*, for although he had given birth to this child there was still plenty to learn from the father. For Noah was a tzadik a saintly man, and as such was very much connected to his father, and had much to learn from him.

ע"כ בעשרה דורות שמאדם ועד נח נאמר ויהי כל ימי אף שהוליד את הבן עכ"ז יש שייכות לעסוק בהאב. כי נח איש צדיק הי' ואצלו יש שייכות להאב,

The ten generations from Noah to Abraham are different. The verse omits the coda, *All the days that X lived were so many, then he died*, because Abraham was wise in the words of

Torah; he observed the entire Torah before it was transmitted, as is well known. That's why his father was not connected to him; which is why the Torah does not say *All the days that X lived were so many, then he died*, for it was unnecessary to continue studying his father, instead it was appropriate to rejoice with him.

אבל בעשרה דורות שמנח עד אברהם לא נאמר ויהי כל ימי כי אברהם אבינו ע"ה הי' חכם בדברי תורה כמו שקיים כל התורה קודם שנתנה כידוע. ע"כ אין שייכת להאב אצלו, וע"כ אחרי שהוליד את הבן לא נאמר ויהי כל ימי כי אין שייכת לעסוק עוד בהאב רק ישמח בו.
