

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT NOACH

DVAR TORAH: THE LANGUAGE OF UNITY

The Sfat Emet asks a simple question on this week's parshah: Why did Hashem stop the building of the Tower of Bavel by confusing their speech – by splitting the world into 70 languages? Surely He had no lack of other methods. Why didn't He just melt the tower or incapacitate its builders?

He answers as follows: The power of the generation of the tower of Bavel, says the Torah, came from their unity – “They are one people with one language” (Bereishit 11:6). The horrifying thing was that they were unified against Hashem. And the source of their unity, says the Sfat Emet, was their use of Lashon Hakodesh, the language of Kedushah, the Hebrew language. Lashon Hakodesh has the special quality of unification because it is the language with which the One G-d created a unified world. Language in general facilitates communication and connects people; but Hebrew, Lashon Hakodesh, the Language of Creation, is the Language of Unity.

That generation hijacked this force of unity to work together harmoniously on their evil project. They used Hashem's special power of unity – so to speak – against Hashem Himself. Therefore the method Hashem used to stop the project was to take their unifying language away.

However, Hashem wanted to preserve Lashon Hakodesh and its power of unity and reserve it for Klal Yisrael, the People of Israel. An ideal Israel is bonded together by Lashon Hakodesh, the language of Kedushah, of Torah and Tefillah and Chesed. Klal Yisrael is, at its essence, a unified nation that speaks the language of "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד" – “Hear Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.” We are the nation who, says Rav Saadiah Gaon, becomes a national entity through its Torah. We close every day's Shemoneh Esrei with, “Bless us, our Father all as one – כולנו כאחד – in the light of Your Face, for through the light of Your face You have given us the Torah of life and the love of Chesed.”

Based on this teaching we can see how two core areas of Am Yisrael's Avodat Hashem, the unity of Israel and Torah study, are interrelated.

A. Unity is not an end in itself; it must be directed towards Torah & Kedushah. This is the lesson of the Dor Haplagah, the Generation of Dispersion, who unified against G-d to build the Tower of Bavel.

B. Learning Torah is the highest expression of the Language of Kedushah, the Language of Unity. Therefore Torah has a special power to bring about unity. True Torah learning counteracts the sin of the Generation of Dispersion.

We pray that all of Israel unifies to serve Hashem through His Torah.

SOURCE GUIDE: NIMROD THE HUNTER

Harav Yechezkel Landau, זצ"ל, (1713-1793, the famed Chief Rabbi of Prague) author of the classic responsa *Nodve Bיהודה*, was asked on behalf of a wealthy landowner whether a Jew is permitted to hunt – as a sport. His response includes a detailed halachic discussion that is followed by the material in this week's source guide. After probing whether a hunter transgresses a number of specific prohibitions, including *צער בעלי חיים*, causing pain to animals, and *בל תשחית*, wastefulness, he directs a number of general comments toward the original questioner. Our starting point is this week's parshah. [Note: This material is not intended as a source of practical halachic rulings. For matters of halachah, please consult a qualified posek.]

A. Nimrod the Hunter

<p>1. Noda Biyhudah II Yoreh Deiah 10 However I am very amazed by the matter itself. For the only hunters we find in Tanach are Nimrod and Eisav, and this is not the way of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.</p>	<p>נודע ביהודה תניינא יורה דעה י' ואמנם מאד אני תמה על גוף הדבר ולא מצינו איש ציד רק בנמרוד ובעשו ואין זה דרכי בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב.</p>
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<p>2. Bereishit 10:8-9 (8) Kush begat Nimrod, and he began to be a mighty one in the land. (9) He was a mighty hunter before G-d. Therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before G-d.'</p>	<p>בראשית י:ח-ט (ח) וְכוֹשׁ יָלַד אֶת נִמְרוֹד הוּא הָחַל לְהָיוֹת גִּבּוֹר בְּאַרְצוֹ: (ט) הוּא הָיָה גִבּוֹר צֹיֵד לְפָנָי ה' עַל כֵּן יֵאמָר כְּנִמְרוֹד גִּבּוֹר צֹיֵד לְפָנָי ה'.</p>
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Though Rashi and others explain that *גבור ציד* means that Nimrod would trap people into rebelling against G-d (perhaps motivated by the words "before G-d"), the Noda Biyhudah follows Ibn Ezra's explanation:

<p>3. Harav Avraham Ibn Ezra on Bereishit 10:8 He began – to show man's might over the animals for he became a hunter.</p>	<p>ראב"ע על בראשית י:ח והוא החל - להראות גבורות בני אדם על החיות כי ה' גבור ציד.</p>
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A similar expression describes Eisav:

<p>4. Bereishit 25:27 The boys grew up, and Eisav became a man who knows hunting, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a straightforward man, one who dwells in tents.</p>	<p>בראשית כה:כו וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדַע צֹיֵד אִישׁ שֶׁדָּה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֲהָלִים.</p>
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Rashi explains that Eisav, like Nimrod, was also deceptive (though Rashi interprets "a man of the field" as "an idle man who hunts with a bow and arrow"). The Ibn Ezra explains how the same word has two uses, because hunters use trickery to catch their prey.

B. Killing Animals

The Noda Biyhudah mentions the custom not to say "תתחדש" ("Be renewed" – the standard blessing one gives to someone who gets new clothing) when someone gets a new pair of shoes (Rema on Orach Chaim 223:6) because "G-d's mercy is on all of his creatures" (Tehillim 145:9, and see Bava Metzia 85a), for an animal might have been killed to make the shoes. He then exclaims:

<p>5. Noda Biyhudah II Yoreh Deiah 10 How can a Jewish person actively kill animals without any need other than to use his leisure time to be involved in hunting?</p>	<p>נודע ביהודה תניינא יורה דעה י' ואיך ימית איש ישראלי בידים בעלי חיים בלי שום צורך רק לגמור חמדת זמנו להתעסק בצידה?</p>
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The danger of wild animals like wolves and bears also does not justify hunting for sport:

<p>6. Noda Biyhudah II Yoreh Deiah 10 ... But to chase after them in the forests, their natural habitat, when they don't regularly come to settled areas is not a mitzvah, just chasing after his heart's desire ...</p>	<p>נודע ביהודה תניינא יורה דעה י' ... אבל לרדוף אחריהם ביערות מקום מעונתן כשאין רגילין לבוא לישב אין כאן מצוה ואין כאן רק לרדוף אחר תאות לבו ...</p>
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Hunting for sport, he adds, also involves the prohibition of entering dangerous situations. Besides being prohibited, unnecessarily endangering one's self is also spiritually dangerous. Being in a dangerous situation arouses Divine judgement, because in Heaven they must assess whether the person should be saved. In short, the Noda Biyhudah comes out strongly against sport hunting for both moral and halachic reasons.

C. Harav Shimshon Morpurgo, זצ"ל

A similar question had been posed to the 17th century halachic authority Harav Shimshon Morpurgo, זצ"ל, (1681-1740, Italy) and he published a responsum on hunting in his Shemesh Tzedakah. He voices similar halachic and moral concerns, but also quotes a Talmudic drashah on the first verses of Tehillim:

<p>7. Tehillim 1:1-2 1. Fortunate is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and did not stand in the path of the sinners, and did not sit in the gathering of the scoffers. 2. Rather, his desire is for Hashem's Torah and he will meditate in His Torah day and night.</p>	<p>תהילים א-ב: (א) אֲשֶׁר־י הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלְךָ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב. (ב) כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' תִּפְצֹו וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה.</p>
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<p>8. Avodah Zarah 18b Rabbi Shimon son of Pazi expounded: "Fortunate is the man who did not walk" – to the theaters and circuses of the idolaters, "and did not stand in the path of the sinners" – this is one that didn't join the kangion (Rashi: hunting animals with dogs – and all of their actions were for the sake of fun and joy), "and did not sit in the gathering of the scoffers" – that he did not participate in evil plannings. Perhaps a man will then say, 'Since I didn't go to the theater and circus and didn't join the hunt, I will go and be enticed by sleep.' The verse teaches us that this is not so by saying, "he will meditate in His Torah day and night."</p>	<p>עבודה זרה יח: דרש רבי שמעון בן פזי: "אשרי האיש אשר לא הלך" לטרטיאות ולקרקסיות של עובדי כוכבים, "ובדרך חטאים לא עמד" זה שלא עמד בקנגיון (רש"י: צידת חיה על ידי כלבים – וכל מעשיהם לשם שחוק ושמהה) ובמושב לצים לא ישב" שלא ישב בתחבולות. שמא יאמר אדם, 'הואיל ולא הלכתי לטרטיאות ולקרקסיות ולא עמדתי בקנגיון אלך ואתגרה בשינה', תלמוד לומר "ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה."</p>
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The author of the Shemesh Tzedakah comes to similar conclusions, and says:

<p>9. Shemesh Tzedakah Responsum 71 ... And I agreed to prohibit because of these reasons, and because it involves adopting the craft of Eisav the evil one, and acquiring the trait of cruelty, killing the creatures of the Holy One, blessed be He, for no reason. It is also prohibited because of a 'gathering of scoffers', for they said, "One should not go to the stadium, etc. ... For killing an animal is only permitted for the need of the human race and for its benefit, but not to acquire for us the trait of cruelty through spilling blood and killing ...</p>	<p>עבודה זרה יח: ... והסכמתי לאסור מן הטעמים ההם, ומשום תפיסת אומנותו של עשו הרשע וקניית מדת אכזריות להמית בריאותיו של הקב"ה על לא דבר ומשום מושב לצים שהרי אמרו אין הולכין לאצטדיון וכו' ... שהרי לא הותרה מיתת הבעל חי אלא לצורך המין האנושי ולתועלתו ולא להקנותינו מדת אכזריות שפיכות דמים והריגה ...</p>
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D. Six Issues, Broader Ramifications

- These halachic and moral sources on hunting for sport raise six issues: causing pain and death to animals, destructiveness, entering dangerous situations, improper gatherings (moshav leitzim), cultivating a cruel character, and adopting the practices of Eisav and Nimrod, the Chumash's two hunters.
- The discussion, though focusing on sport hunting, has ramifications beyond its original context – how we spend our leisure time, how we relate to animals and other creatures in G-d's world, how we cultivate sensitivity and avoid cruelty, and how much of gentile culture we adopt.

WE NEED JUICE BY RABBI SHAYA KARLINSKY

How did Noach last a whole year in the ark caring for all of the world's animals?

Imagine the smell.

Imagine the noise of the birds and monkeys and jackals and dogs.

Imagine the challenge of timing all the animals' feedings – the Midrash tells us that once Noach was late feeding the lion and the lion bit him.

What was Noach's secret? How did he manage?

I believe Noach had two qualities that were essential for getting through that year.

First, he was devoted; he was *moser nefesh* for the animals. Noach invented the concept of 24/7.

But people are devoted for different reasons. Someone who's devoted for ulterior motives - for personal gain; because it pays off – might last a while. He'll stick it out for a week, for a month. But to feed all of the world's animals on an ark for a whole year – your devotion must be based on love for Hashem and for all of His creatures. It must be totally altruistic devotion.

But Noach couldn't have made it without another quality. It's hard to put it into words. He must have had a certain kind of joy, an inner energy – the best word I have for it is juice. To be motivated you have to be animated. Noach must have been full of positive energy.

In order to exist as a Torah Jew in today's world – that seems to be crumbling around us – we have to build תיבות – our own personal arks. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, זצ"ל, and others have taught us that the ark of our times is the Jewish home, the Jewish family. But making a Jewish family work takes a lot of work. To keep our homes and families functioning to their maximum we need Noach's two qualities. We need devotion to others based on real love and giving. And we also need to live with an inner energy – we need juice.

We mourn the kedoshim, victims of terror, brutally murdered this week:

Harav Yishayahu Krishevski, הי"ד,

Alon Guverg, הי"ד, and

Chaviv Chaim, הי"ד.

This week's Daf Keshet is dedicated to their memory, and with prayers for a refuah shleimah (complete healing) for all those wounded in the attacks.

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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