

*Try to think of at least one other covenant in Torah that speaks of a *brit* (a covenant) and an *ot* (sign). What is the covenant and what is the symbol there? Why do you think that symbol was chosen?

5) When Noah finally emerges from the ark he plants a vineyard. Why do you think that he did so? (Did it have a connection to his experience in the ark? To his life before the flood? To what had happened to the Earth - both plants and living creatures? What might wine symbolize?)

*Challenging question.

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TORAH SPARKS תורה

פרשת נח Parashat Noah

October 16-17, 2015 – 4 Heshvan 5776 – ד' חשוון תשע"ו

Annual (Genesis 6:9-11:32): Etz Hayim p. 41; Hertz p. 26

Triennial (Genesis 11:1-32): Etz Hayim p. 58; Hertz p. 38

Haftarah (Isaiah 54:1-55:5): Etz Hayim, p. 65; Hertz p. 41

Welcome to the new weekly "Torah Sparks" direct from the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem! We have just begun our year of learning here in Jerusalem. The CY's beautiful Beit Midrash is full of students seeking to explore and develop their relationships with Jewish text, prayer and community. Torah Sparks gives you a taste of the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem every week.

The Choreography of Chaos and Control - Parashat Noah by Rabbi Joel G. Levy, CY Rosh Yeshiva

In Parshat Noah we will witness the fragility of those primal partitions. When appalled by creation, God causes the divisions to blur; chaotic liquid pours down from the heavens above and bubbles up from the waters beneath, threatening to return the earth to its original state of entropy.

Bereshit 7:11

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, נִבְקְעוּ יְאֵי	11 ...on the same day were all the
כָּל-מַעְיֵנֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת רֶבֶה,	fountains of the great deep broken up,
וַאֲרָבֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, נִפְתְּחוּ	and the windows of heaven were opened.

That primordial chaos is never destroyed or negated; it can merely be held in check. Despite the promise at the end of the parasha (Bereshit 9:21) that God will never again destroy the

world, the rabbis assume that those waters are still there, ready to burst out and destroy the world. In a beautiful Midrash in Masechet Sukkah (53a-b) King David digs down and touches this chaos whilst preparing the infrastructure for the altar in the temple:

When David dug the Pits, the Deep (t'hom) arose and threatened to submerge the world... [David] inscribed the Name of God upon a shard; cast it into the Deep and it subsided sixteen thousand cubits.

Our lives are fragile, even though we attempt to delude ourselves that they are not. Any order that we manage to impose on the world is only ever partial and temporary. We dwell in an evolving bubble of order in a universe of constantly increasing entropy. Like God's act of creation, every act of human creation involves temporarily stemming the tide of chaos. So why not try to rid the world of chaos/water entirely! King David's sees the results of such a solution in the continuation of that Midrash:

When he saw that it had subsided to such a great extent, he said, "The nearer it is to the earth, the better the earth can be kept watered" and he uttered the fifteen Songs of Ascent and the Deep re-ascended fifteen thousand cubits...

To rid the world of chaos/water is to rid it of life itself! To seek order at any price is to insist on desiccated lifelessness. In our mythology water represents the source of both life and chaos; they are two sides of the same coin! Chaos may be terrifying but it is an essential part of the universe - the source of all life and creativity. Like God, we seek to carve out a world of order using a sea of creative chaos as our eternally renewed raw material.

A Vort for Parashat Noah

Verse 7:7 says that Noah and his family "went into the Ark because of the waters of the flood." Rashi says this showed Noah's lack of faith - despite God's word, he waited until the rains actually started. R' Yitzhak Isaac of Zidichov, a noted 19th century Hasidic rabbi, explained just the opposite, that Noah had such great faith in God's mercy for all His creatures, even the evil ones, that he was sure that God would not bring the flood to destroy them. And, the Hasidim tell, when R' Yitzhak Isaac died and went to Heaven, Rashi came out to greet him to show appreciation for the his explanation of the verse.

Table Talk

by Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty

In the 10 generations since Adam, humanity has managed to create a society that is so corrupt that it cannot continue. Here are a few questions to start some discussions:

- 1) The Torah tells us that Noah was 'a righteous man in his generation' (6:9). Was he righteous in his own right or did he only seem righteous in comparison to the people of his time? What difficulties do you think that Noah faced because of his behavior? Why? (This question is partially based on a discussion found in Rashi's commentary on 6:9.)
- 2) God told Noah to build an ark. Who would be saved in the ark (6:17-7:3)? What might be the logic behind this?
- 3) Why do you think that God had Noah work hard and build the ark rather than create it miraculously for him?
- 4) Following the flood, God makes a covenant with the living things on Earth (9:8-17). What is the covenant and what is its symbol? Why do you think that this was chosen as a symbol for this covenant?