Imrey Noam

Parashat Noach

Shabbat Shalom

October 17 | 6 Cheshvan | 5787

SHABBAT TIMES

City	Candle lighting Oct. 16	Shabbat ends Oct. 17
New York	5:56	6:53
Los Angeles	5:59	6:54
Chicago	5:49	6:47

Local time in each city · All times PM

How Do We Recognize a Miracle?

A thought on the parashah
Rabbi Reuven Kuklin



"Of every clean animal take seven pairs, a male and its mate; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and its mate" (Genesis 7:2).

How did all the animals fit inside the ark? There had to be room not only for the animals themselves, but also for enough food to last an entire year! Ramban, one of the great Torah commentators, explains that this was a miracle: a small space held far more than its natural capacity.

But Ramban asks another question. If a miracle was needed anyway, why did Noach have to build such an enormous ark? Could G-d not have fitted all the animals into a much smaller vessel?

His answer is striking: the large ark was intended to minimize the miracle. Many miracles in the Torah follow this pattern. A person does everything within his power and leaves the rest to Heaven. Noach had to build a spacious ark and make every necessary preparation. What lay beyond human ability was accomplished by G-d.

Yet the question seems to remain. If even the large ark could not naturally hold all the animals, then fitting them inside still defied the laws of nature. What difference did its size make? Either way, space placed no limit on the Creator. In what sense was the miracle smaller?

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein explains that the issue is not the greatness of the miracle, but how clearly a person sees it. G-d leaves us free choice. When a



miracle is unmistakable, it is hard to deny His hand. When it is concealed behind seemingly natural circumstances, we can still choose not to notice.

Someone looking at an enormous ark might never stop to calculate how much room the animals needed. He could reassure himself: "It is such a large vessel!" Had they all entered a tiny boat, it would have been much harder to close his eyes to the miracle.

The same is true of our whole world. At a glance, everything seems familiar and ordinary, as though there were nothing to wonder at. But when we stop and reflect, we begin to discover the remarkable harmony and profound wisdom woven into creation. Then, behind what we have grown accustomed to calling nature, we recognize the hand of the Creator.

WHAT DID THE LIONS EAT?

Noach had to preserve every species. He could hardly feed one animal to another! What, then, did the predators eat?

Radak explains that Noach gathered fruit, seeds and plants; even predatory animals ate plant food at that time (Genesis 6:21). According to this interpretation, there was no need to store meat. Isaiah describes a similar future: "The lion, like the ox, will eat straw" (11:7). What seems inseparable from an animal's nature today does not limit the Creator.

Genesis 7:2; Ramban on Genesis 6:19, as explained by Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein. Lions: Radak on Genesis 6:21; Rabbi Reuven Kuklin, imrey.org. English translation and adaptation.

When Knowledge Becomes Faith

A parable and reflection

Rabbi Reuven Kuklin

Five minutes before a major match, a strangely dressed man approached a famous soccer player. “I am a magician. Would you like to see yourself sixty years from now?” The stadium was roaring; millions were waiting at home. Curiosity won. “Show me.” The stranger plucked a hair from his beard, and a screen appeared.

On it lay an old man, his thin hands resting on a blanket, his breathing labored. His family sat around him. He closed his eyes and drew his last breath. After a brief silence, the conversation began: whom to call, when to hold the funeral, what would happen to the inheritance. The screen went dark. “Who was that?” the player asked. “You. But do not worry. You still have sixty years. Now go; they are waiting.”



The crowd chanted his name. He sat staring at his strong, young hands. Could he take the field with the same excitement? He had learned nothing new: he had always known he would not live forever. Before, however, he had known it. Now he had seen it.

This parable helps us understand Rashi's description of Noach: he “believed and did not believe” that the Flood would come, entering the ark only when the water forced him to. How could someone build an ark for years and warn others, yet still not fully believe?

There can be an enormous distance between knowledge and feeling. Noach knew G-d's words, but before his eyes stood the familiar world. The sun shone, people went about their business, and everything seemed to say: tomorrow will be like yesterday. His mind knew about the Flood; his heart still clung to what his eyes could see.

The Torah therefore says: “Know today, and take it to heart” (Deuteronomy 4:39). Knowledge is only the first step. Truth must become part of our inner life. Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein emphasized the value of vividly picturing an idea: it helps bring to the heart what the mind already understands.

A WORLD BUILT ON KINDNESS

“A world is built on kindness” (Psalms 89:3). In the ark, Noach and his family devoted themselves to caring for the animals. Their selfless work helped sustain the world that would emerge after the Flood.

During a visit to Lyon, France, Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman and his companions stayed with Rabbi Yechia Touboul. One morning they learned that the airport would close to private aircraft in ninety minutes. They had to leave at once, but their hostess had already prepared breakfast. Rabbi Steinman insisted that they stop by: they must not hurt someone who had worked so hard for her guests. Understanding their hurry, she packed the food for them to take along.

They thanked her and caught their flight. Because it had been brought forward, however, the ordered meals had not arrived. For the next twenty-four hours, their only food was what their thoughtful hostess had packed.

TAKING CARE OF WHAT IS NOT OURS

The Sages teach that the final judgment against the generation of the Flood was sealed because of robbery (Sanhedrin 108a). The care shown by the great Torah sages offers a striking contrast.

It is told that Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, the Alter of Novardok, once borrowed a clothes brush from another hotel guest. By the time he went to return it, its owner had left.

Twenty-five years later, they met by chance. The rabbi recognized him immediately, took the brush from his pocket and returned it. Throughout those years he had carried it with him on weekdays, hoping to meet its owner and give it back at once.

Rashi on Genesis 7:7; Deuteronomy 4:39. Rabbi Steinman: adapted from Dirshu material at imrey.org. The Alter of Novardok: supplied source. English translation and adaptation.