

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Noach

4 Cheshvan, 5779 – October 13, 2018

Compiled from the works of  
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**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Parshas Noach**

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

**בראשית ז', י"ב:** וַיְהִי הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה:  
רש"י ד"ה ויהי הגשם על הארץ: ולהלן הוא אומר ויהי המבול, אלא כשהורידן, הורידן ברחמים שאם יחזרו יהיו גשמי  
ברכה, וכשלא חזרו היו למבול:

**Bereishis 7:12:** And the rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

**Rashi Heading – And the rain was upon the earth:** And further<sup>1</sup> Scripture says “Now the *Flood* was ...” Rather, when He brought the rains down, He brought them down with mercy, so that if they would repent, they would be rains of blessing. When they did not repent, they became a flood.

**Synopsis**

In this week's Torah portion, Noach, the Torah tells us of the great Flood which Hashem brought in order to destroy the world, which had sunken to the lowest levels of depravity. He commanded Noach to build an Ark in order to save him, his wife and their three sons and daughters-in-law. He also commanded Noach to save (at least) two of each species of animal. Noach's family and the animals who were saved on the Ark later repopulated the earth.

The Torah tells us two seemingly contradictory things regarding how the rain fell upon the earth. First it tells us that<sup>2</sup> "the rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights." Rain implies water which fell gently, with mercy. Several verses later, the Torah tells us that<sup>3</sup> "the Flood was forty days upon the earth." The word *flood*, as opposed to rain, implies torrential, destructive rain. Destructive rain and merciful rain could not have fallen upon the earth simultaneously. It had to be either one or the other. Which was it?

Rashi explains in his comments to our verse that "when He brought the rains down, He brought them down with mercy, in order that if they would repent, they would be rains of blessing. When they did not repent, the water became a flood." Rashi seems to be saying that the Torah is referring to two different periods of rain. When the rain began falling, it fell gently. Once it became

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 7:17.  
2. Our Parshah, Bereishis 7:12.  
3. Our Parshah, Bereishis 7:17.

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clear that the population was not returning to G-d, it became the Flood. Yet the two different periods of rain could not have both fallen for the same "40 days and 40 nights."

This can be understood from Rashi's explanation to the verse<sup>4</sup> "For in another seven days, I will make it rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out all beings that I have made, off the face of the earth." Rashi comments there, that the forty days "correspond to the (time required for the) formation of the fetus, for they sinned by burdening the One Who formed them, causing Him to fashion the forms of children born of incestuous and forbidden unions." The formation of the fetus in 40 days is one unit of time. After that, throughout the remainder of the nine months, the fetus develops in stages within the womb. Many individual actions are performed, i.e. the formation of each of the baby's individual limbs. These are all separate acts which take place in separate times.

In much the same way, the waters of the Flood which fell upon the earth for 40 days were one unit; each individual day was not an additional part of the punishment. The second day of the flood was not an additional punishment. Each day was a part of the 40 days. The beginning of the rain, the very first drops, can be said to have fallen throughout the 40 days, as each moment included all of the days of rain. Had the people returned to G-d, there would have been no need for destructive rain.

### **Rashi's Explanation**

This week's Torah portion, Noach, tells us of the flood which Hashem brought to destroy the world. He commanded Noach to build an Ark, in order to save himself, his wife, his three sons and daughters-in-law and at least two of each of the animals. From Noach's family and the animals aboard the Ark, the world was repopulated after the flood. We find a seeming contradiction in the words of Scripture. First the Torah tells us that "the rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights." The implication being, that it was "rain of blessing," falling gently upon the earth. Then, several verses further, the Torah tells us that "the Flood was forty days upon the earth." The use of the word *flood* implies that they were destructive waters, which were meant to destroy the earth. The water came from above and below. The Midrash tells us that the water was boiling hot, not

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4. Our Parshah, Bereishis 7:4.

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allowing the possibility for anything to survive. Which rain-water was upon the earth for 40 days and nights? Was it the gentle waters of blessing, or the deadly flood waters?

Rashi answers this by telling us that "when He brought the rains down, He brought them down with mercy, so that if they would repent, they would be rains of blessing. When the people failed to repent, the water became a destructive flood."

The Torah is telling us that two types of rain were upon the earth for during two different periods. At first the waters fell gently, giving the people the opportunity to do Teshuvah. It could have been "rain of blessing." However, once it was obvious that the people had no intent of doing Teshuvah, the water was transformed into a flood.

### **Difficulties in Understanding Rashi**

As we said, from Rashi's explanation both verses seem to be talking about different times. The first verse, "the rain was upon the earth," is discussing the very beginning of the rainfall. At that point there was still hope for the rain to be something good. Whereas the second verse, "the Flood was forty days upon the earth," is talking about the transformation of the pleasant water to flood-waters. This took place on the very first day. According to the Midrash cited above, from that point on people died immediately due to the boiling hot water. How is this possible? The verse states explicitly that "the *rain* (meaning the gentle, beneficial rain) was upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights." In other words, the Torah is telling us that for the entire 40 days there was "water of blessing upon the earth." If the Torah would not mention the words "upon the earth," we would have no question. We might be able to explain that "rain of blessing" fell from the sky, but after it reached the earth it was something quite different. However, we remain with what appears to be a contradiction between the two verses. What sort of rain was upon the earth for 40 days? Were they waters of blessing, or were they flood-waters?

### **The Explanation**

This seeming contradiction can be explained as follows. Rashi explains the verse<sup>5</sup> "For in another seven days, I will make it rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out all beings that I have made, off the face of the earth" in the following manner. The forty days "correspond to the (time required for the) formation of the fetus, for the people sinned by

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5. See footnote 4.

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burdening the One Who formed them to fashion the forms of children born of incestuous and forbidden unions."

The formation of the fetus in forty days is one single action which takes 40 days in order to be accomplished. The fetus, which is formed during this time, contains no actual limbs. What it does contain is the potential for all of the parts of the entire body. After the first 40 days, each of the limbs, organs, sinews and veins etc. are formed one step at a time. This is done as a result of many individual actions which are performed. For example, first the baby's hands are formed. They are then separated into ten fingers. These fingers are then given joints, i.e. knuckles. Then the fingernails are formed; finally, at the end of the nine months the fingernails are completed<sup>6</sup>. The same is true of each individual limb and organ of the body. These are all separate actions which Hashem performs in order to complete the formation of the baby.

In much the same way, the first 40 days of water which fell upon the earth constituted one action, one unit of time. They were not forty separate days of punishment. The original rain was one unit which lasted for forty days. However, just as the first 40 days of the development of the fetus included the potential of each limb of the body, so too the potential for the entire punishment was included within those 40 days.

The first drops of the drops which fell were "rains of blessing." They fell at the beginning of the 40 days (which included the entire 40-day unit of time). They could have remained a blessing had the people returned to G-d. The very first second in which the rain began, it had the potential to either be beneficial, gentle, good rain, or to be a torrential flood. It can therefore be said that the first drops fell upon the earth throughout all of the days of the flood.

### **A Deeper Lesson from Rashi**

The deeper, mystical meaning of the Flood was that it came<sup>7</sup> "to purify the earth ... for the earth was filled with robbery, and it became extremely decadent. It required extreme purification." This was the reason for the Flood. The water was comparable to a Mikveh<sup>8</sup> which contains forty

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6. See Talmud Yevomos 80, at the beginning of Side a.

7. See Torah Ohr at the beginning of our Parshah.

8. A Mikveh is a ritual bath, which may not contain drawn water. It spiritually cleanses one who has become ritually impure.

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*se'ah*<sup>9</sup> of water, and purifies one who has become ritually impure." That is the reason that the flood is referred to in Scripture as<sup>10</sup> "the restful waters," meaning that the waters purified the earth.

Based on this we can explain that "the rain (rain of blessing) was *upon the earth* for 40 days and 40 nights." This does in no way contradict the fact that "the Flood was 40 days upon the earth." Both are true. It was a flood, and it wreaked havoc in the world. At the same time, it brought about the purification of which the world was in such dire need. May we merit purifying the earth with our actions, thereby bring the blessing Moshiach now.

*(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Noach, 5743)*

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9. A *se'ah* is an ancient liquid measure. The minimum measure for a Mikveh is forty *se'ah* of water. The forty *se'ah* of the Mikveh correspond to the forty days of the flood which purified the earth.

10. Yeshaya 54:9.

**DEDICATED IN HONOR OF  
the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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**IN HONOR OF  
Chaim and Aiden Oded שיחיו Morris**

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**DEDICATED BY THEIR PARENTS  
Rabbi & Mrs. Menachem M. and Chaya Mushka שיחיו Morris**

\* \* \*

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR MOTHER  
Mrs. Brocha bas Reb Tzvi Nechemiah Hacoheh ע"ה Cohen  
Passed away on 8 Shevat, 5778  
May Her Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life**

\*

**DEDICATED BY HER FAMILY**

\* \* \*

**IN HONOR OF  
Mr. Sholom Moshe Hacoheh ben Tzivia שי' Cohen  
For a complete and speedy recovery**

\* \* \*

**DEDICATED BY  
Hatomim Moshe Shlomoh Zohar שי' Mars**

\*

May he merit to be a Chossid, a Yerei Shomayim and a Lamdon

## מוקדש לזכות

כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש

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### לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו מאריס

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### נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

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### לעילוי נשמת

מרת ברכה בת ר' צבי נחמי' הכהן ע"ה כהן

נפטרה ביום ח' שבט, ה'תשע"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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### נדפס ע"י בני משפחתה שיחיו

\* \* \*

### לזכות

ר' שלום משה הכהן בן צבי' שי' כהן

לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

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### נתרם ע"י

הת' משה שלמה זהר שי' מאריס

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יהי רצון שיזכה להיות חסיד, ירא שמים, ולמדן