

רמב"ן · אור החיים

Ramban & Or HaChayim

ראשון FIRST ALIYAH

6:9 *These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*

RAMBAN

THESE ARE 'TOLDOTH' NOAH. Commentators have explained the word toldoth to mean "his experiences" [or "his events"] much the same as the sense of: what a day 'yeiled' (may bring forth). In this way the word toldoth refers to the entire section [since all the events of the flood are occurrences in the life of Noah]. But this does not appear to me to be correct since the external events in the life of a person, [over which he has no control], are not his toldoth. The correct interpretation is that the word toldoth here retains its literal meaning of "progeny," just as, 'These are 'toldoth' (the progeny of) the sons of Noah; And these are 'toldoth' (the progeny of) Ishmael. Thus Scripture is saying, "These are the progeny of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth." Scripture however repeats, And Noah begot three sons, because [at the end of the first verse] it interrupted by saying, Noah was a righteous man, and whole-hearted, in order to inform us why He commanded him concerning the ark. And even though Scripture has already stated above, And Noah was five hundred years old; and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth, it returns to mention them a second time in order to relate that Noah was unlike all his ancestors who begot daughters and sons. This is the meaning of the words, three sons; Scripture mentions their number in order to say that these three alone were his progeny, and they were saved by his merit, and by them was the whole earth overspread.

HE WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN AND WHOLE-HEARTED. Scripture mentions that he was guiltless and perfect in his righteousness in order to inform us that he was worthy to be saved from the flood without any punishment whatever since he was whole-hearted in righteousness. For a tzadik (a righteous person) is one who is found guiltless in judgment as opposed to the wicked person, as Scripture says, And they come unto judgment, and the judges judge them, by justifying the righteous, and condemning the wicked; and also, For Thou art just in all that has come upon us, for Thou hast dealt truly; similarly, In righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. But in the case of Abraham, concerning whom it says, that he will command his children to do 'tz'dakah' and 'mishpat,' Scripture praises him for righteousness which is synonymous with judgment, and for mercy which is synonymous with tz'dakah. And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said, "Righteous in deeds; whole-hearted in his heart." However, it is written, Thou art whole-hearted in thy ways; [the term "whole-hearted" is thus used in connection with "ways" and not with matters of the heart]. Now after Scripture said that Noah was a righteous man, meaning that he was neither a man of violence nor one who perverted his ways as did the guilty ones of his generation, it further said that he

walked with the glorious Name, fearing Him alone. He was not enticed by the astrologers, enchanters and soothsayers, and surely not by idolatry, and he paid no heed to them at all; to G-d alone he did always cleave, and he walked in the way G-d chose or taught him for he was a prophet. This is analogous in meaning to the verse, After the Eternal your G-d shall ye walk, and Him shall ye fear, which is stated in connection with the removal of him who prophesies to encourage the worship of idols and gives a sign or wonder to verify his words, as I will explain. I will again mention this in connection with the verse, Walk before Me, and be thou whole-hearted, if He Who is perfect in knowledge will be with me. Now since Noah was a righteous man and undeserving of punishment, it was fitting that his sons and his household be saved by his merit for if his sons were to perish, it would have been a punishment upon him. Or it may be said that he was a perfectly righteous man, and his sons and household were also righteous since he taught them; this is analogous to that which is written concerning Abraham: For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household.

IN HIS GENERATIONS. Some of our Rabbis explained it to his credit, [i.e., he was righteous despite his generation]; it follows all the more had he lived in a generation of righteous people. Others explain it to his discredit. [In comparison with his own generation he was considered righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Abraham he would not have been considered of any consequence.] Thus the language of Rashi. The correct interpretation according to the plain meaning of Scripture appears to be that he alone was a righteous man in those generations, there being no righteous or whole-hearted men except him in those generations. In a similar sense is the verse, For thee I have seen righteous before Me in this generation, meaning that there is no other in the generation worthy of being saved. Scripture says, in his generations —[using the plural form]— because many generations passed since the time men had become corrupted, and there was no righteous man besides him. Let not the word of our Rabbis concerning Methuselah, [which said that he was a righteous man], cause you difficulty for Scripture tells only that there was no righteous man worthy of being saved from the flood in all those generations except Noah.

OR HACHAIM

Theses are the generations of Noah. When the Torah uses the term "these," it usually intends to exclude something, i.e. "these generations and not any others." In this instance there was no need for the Torah to use the term "these," as we already know that all the generations were doomed. For this reason the sages understand the word to teach us that the principal "generations," i.e. descendants of a person, are man's good deeds. They therefore read the verse as if there were no comma between the words נח, נח to indicate that Noah's descendants were his good deeds (Bereshit Rabbah 30,6). The Midrash was careful to say that the "principal" descendants of the righteous are their good deeds; naturally they also have other descendants. When the

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

good deeds of Noah are described by the word אלה, this is only in contrast with those of the word תולדת at the beginning of chapter 5.

Another meaning of the sequence נח נח, is illustrated in an imaginary conversation between Moses and Noah reported in Devarim Rabbah 11,3. In that conversation Noah claimed to have been greater than Moses because he was saved during the deluge. Moses retorted that Noah had not been able to save anyone other than himself, whereas he had saved his generation after the sin of the golden calf. The word אלה accordingly describes the limited value of Noah's good deeds. They sufficed only to save himself. The additional word בדורותיו further underlines that Noah did not succeed to make penitents out of his peers. His sons who were considered as his "branches" are therefore included in the name Noah. The Torah accords Noah a compliment which it did not accord to righteous people who had lived before his time. Noah's righteous predecessors all had other righteous people to model themselves after, something that did not apply to Noah. He grew up surrounded only by wicked people. The word אלה therefore also has a positive connotation in that it sets Noah's pious conduct apart from all those who had preceded him.

There is another message contained in this verse which is commented upon in Bereshit Rabbah 25,2. The Midrash discusses whether Noah's name was in itself blissful, or whether in view of Noah's righteous way of life the blessings he conferred on earth were subsequently reflected in his name. Here is some of the discussion: "When G'd created Adam He invested him with a full range of authority. The cow obeyed the ploughman, the furrow co-operated with the plough. As soon as Adam sinned, the cow no longer responded to its owner, nor did the earth respond to the plough. This situation continued until the time of Noah. Once Noah appeared on earth the situation changed in man's favour. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish added that until Noah the waters would flood the earth, something that stopped during Noah's time. At any rate, the name Noah is repeated in our verse to indicate the beneficial effect his existence had on the well being of his peers. The repetition of the word תולדת and the use of the word איש are an allusion to the fact that Noah was איש האדמה, an outstanding farmer (as is stated explicitly after the deluge (9,20). Our sages (Tanchuma Bereshit 11) find Noah's successful impact on farming alluded to in 5,29 where his father Lamech predicts that his son Noah will provide relief for עצבון, "the painful labour of our hands." The fact that Noah was born without a foreskin gave rise to these hopes. Apparently Noah invented a usable plough. The word צדיק hints that the righteous is the foundation of the universe, that without a righteous person the universe would forfeit its reason for existence. But for Noah the earth would have perished at the time of the deluge. The word חמים should be understood in the same vein as the Talmud Avodah Zarah 10 explains it. The Talmud understands the word צדיק as a reference to Noah's deeds, whereas the word חמים is a reference to Noah's lifestyle, his attitudes [as opposed to understanding the word as an adjective describing his righteousness. Ed.] All of this is additional praise for Noah who was able to perfect his personality in the face of such wicked contemporaries. Noah did far more than could have been expected of him. Our sages call such conduct לפנינו משורת הדין. According to Samuel II, 22,27 G'd acts loyally with the loyal, whereas He uses wile in dealing with the perverse. According to this yardstick Noah would have been free to do like-

wise, but he chose to be more considerate than required by law. When the Torah describes Noah's perfection as בדורותיו this means that his goodness was recognised even by the people of his time. The plural in the expression בדורותיו reminds us that the average person's lifespan involves three generations. He lives during part of his father's generation, his contemporaries, and during part of his children's generation. Noah was unique during all these three generations; the only righteous member of a former generation that he shared time on earth with was his grandfather Methuselah. When the Torah tells us את נח, האלוקים התהלך נח, that Noah walked with G'd, this means that even vis a vis G'd Noah's conduct was very constructive. Our sages tell us in connection with Noah's offering after the deluge (8,21) וירח השם את ריח הניחוח, that Noah's name is alluded to in the word ניחוח. The reason the Torah repeats the name Noah at the beginning is to refer to this second dimension of Noah's beneficial effect on mankind, when G'd decided not to bring another deluge ever, due to Noah's gratitude. The reason the Torah uses the verb הלך when describing Noah's conduct vis-a-vis G'd is because G'd describes a desirable conduct by man in those terms in Deut. 28,9. When the Torah here employs the reflexive התהלך, this merely emphasises that Noah kept walking with G'd. He provided pleasure to His Creator all the time, something which found its ultimate expression in his sacrifice after the deluge.

6:10 And Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Yefet.

RAMBAN

SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH. It appears to me that Japheth was the oldest, as it is said, the brother of Japheth the elder, and so in counting their generations, Scripture mentions the children of Japheth first. Ham was the youngest of all, as it is said, And [Noah] knew what his youngest son had done unto him. Here, however, Scripture mentions Shem first because of his superiority and then Ham, for they were born in that order. Thus Japheth is left at the end. But Scripture did not want to say, "Shem and Japheth and Ham," because in that case all of them would have been mentioned out of the order of their birth, and Japheth had no outstanding quality to merit that the order of birth be dispensed with on his account. Shem, however, is mentioned here first because of his superiority even though in the account of the generations he is last. Similarly, [we find the verses]: The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael; And I gave to Isaac Jacob and Esau.

OR HACHAIM

Noah fathered three sons. Why did the Torah have to repeat here that Noah fathered three sons when we have been told this already in 5,32? The mention of the number "three" seems quite superfluous in view of the fact that the Torah tells us the name of each son. Surely we can count up to three! Why did Noah's name have to be repeated? No one else is the subject here! The word בנים, sons, also seems superfluous. All the Torah had to write was: "Noah fathered Shem, Cham, and Yepheth." Why did the Torah add the word את in front of each of the names?

In view of our explanation that the Torah considered Noah's good deeds his principal descendants, and that it was on that account that Noah had found favour in the eyes of G'd, our verse is necessary. Had the Torah failed to repeat the information contained in 5,32, we would not have considered his three sons as a positive accomplishment on Noah's part. The Torah does

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

not report anything positive or negative about these sons. We would have thought these three sons as unfit either on account of their own poor characters or because Noach had not fathered them in order to fulfil G'd's commandment. The Torah therefore lists the birth of these three sons immediately after the list of Noach's good deeds so as to include them in that list. I have found in the Midrash that Noach foresaw that his sons would anger G'd and as a result he decided there was no point in siring children during the first five hundred years of his life. At that point G'd commanded Noach to marry and to have children. He had children in order to keep alive the human species. I believe that this Midrash interpreted the words *אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים הִתְהַלַּךְ נֹחַ* to mean that Noach thought he was approaching death; therefore he sired children before it was too late. Another meaning of these words could be that Noach realised he would soon be judged by the attribute of Justice for failing to have sired children. This is why he hastened to get married and to sire children to rectify his sin of omission. Another reason for Noach's tardiness in marrying and raising a family (according to several Midrashim) is that G'd commanded Noach to build the ark when he was 480 years old. The deluge would occur in another 120 years. In those days children were not held accountable for their sins until they were one hundred years old. Noach wanted to insure that when the deluge came his children deserved to be saved because they had not reached the age when G'd held them responsible for their deeds. Hence he waited until he was 500 years old before he sired any children (Compare Bereshit Rabba 26,2 based on Isaiah 65,20). Accordingly, Noach's eldest son would be under 100 years old at the beginning of the deluge.

The reason Noach's name is mentioned once more a) is to demonstrate again that he brought a new-found *מנוחה* rest or satisfaction to life on earth, b) to remind us that were it not for their father, these sons would not have been saved. Surely there were many youngsters below the age of one hundred at the time the deluge started and none of those were spared. I refer the reader to my comment on the words: "I have seen you to be a righteous person in this generation (7,1)." The three times *אֵת* which appeared at first glance as superfluous refer to the wives of Noach's sons who were also saved only on account of Noach. If the sons of Noach per se did not warrant saving, why did G'd consider it necessary to repeat the report of the three sons that were born to Noach prior to the deluge?

We have to fall back on Sanhedrin 69 where the Talmud proves that the list of Noach's sons presented by the Torah is not according to their seniority but is based on the sons' relative intelligence. Shem is mentioned first as he was the most intelligent. If this were not so he could not have been described as one hundred years old when he sired Arpachshad two years after the deluge (11,10). If the Torah had not mentioned the extra word *בנים*, but had merely given their names, we would have concluded that the list of their names was according to the order of their births.

6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

OR HACHAIM

The earth had become corrupt. This entire verse is superfluous in view of 6,5. If the Torah only wanted to spell out details of man's sins, this too had been spelled out in greater detail in the previous passage. If the Torah wanted to add the element of violence perpetrated by man on earth, that is all that needed

mentioning here. Besides, why did the Torah switch to the use of the name *אלוקים*, the attribute of Justice, whereas in 6,5 G'd's attribute of Mercy is used? What do the words *לפני האלוקים* in our verse add to our understanding? Why does the Torah repeat once more in 6,12 that "G'd saw, etc.?" The Torah certainly did not need to tell us that G'd had become aware of man's sins, as we all know that He is aware of all this?

We must understand the passage along the lines of the Mishnah Avot 4,11 that when a person violates a single commandment he acquires one accuser for himself. The "accuser" is to be understood as a destructive power (angel). This destructive power is not unleashed until the Supreme Judge of the whole universe has given a verdict concerning the person guilty of a misdemeanour. This is the deeper meaning of every time the Torah speaks about a sinner "carrying his guilt" (Leviticus 5,17 et al). Once G'd has pronounced judgment, He unleashes these accumulated destructive forces. When the prophet Jeremiah 2,19 says: *חִסְרְךָ רָעָהְךָ*, "your wickedness will discipline you," he refers to these destructive forces which our sins have created and which G'd unleashes after having judged us. We have to appreciate that although G'd holds the accuser in check so that he cannot yet harm us, this applies only as long as our sins are relatively few or minor. If our sins keep accumulating, they exert pressure on the Heavenly Court so that the perpetrator of the sin may find himself the victim of some of these accusers even before final judgment has been decreed upon him. When the Torah speaks of "the earth had become corrupted before G'd," this means that before G'd had completed judging everyone individually, the collective total of the destructive powers created by man's sins was such that the destructive forces already dominated the earth. The reason the Torah speaks about *הָאָרֶץ* is to tell us that the corruption had penetrated earth itself.

The Torah said in the previous verse: "the earth had become full of this corruption in the form of violence." Why did the Torah reverse this sequence? It should first have stated what G'd saw, and afterwards the extent of the corruption. As it is, the Torah tells us of the effect before telling us of the cause! The inverted method of reporting is to emphasise that even after the earth had already become full of corruption, all of which is subsumed under the heading "violence," man added further abominations to those already perpetrated. Although it is G'd's virtue to forgive or suspend punishment (*נושא עון*) until the time He sits in judgment, the sins of this generation were such that G'd could no longer practice this virtue. It was somewhat similar to when Cain had said to G'd that he found his penalty too hard to bear. He had used the term *גדול עוני מנשוא*, "is my guilt too great to forgive (4,13)?" Alternatively, the words *ותשחת הארץ* refer to the actual deeds, which caused the earth to become full of destructive agents all of which are described as *חמס*. G'd informed Noach (6,13) of this when He told him that *קץ כל בשר בא לפני*, that "the end for all flesh is approaching." According to the Zohar this means that the destructive forces created by man's sins which are called *קץ* have appeared before G'd demanding the speedy destruction of the perpetrators of all this evil. The Torah tells us for how long G'd restrained the attribute of Justice. This is why we have repeated references to G'd's awareness of man's wickedness ever since 6,5. When the Torah here finally uses the word *אלוקים* to describe G'd, it is to give notice that the attribute of Mercy itself had turned into one demanding that justice be done.

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

The earth was filled with violence. There is a Midrash which illustrates the violence perpetrated by describing how people each helped themselves to a lupine out of a bowl that was set on the table. The Rabbis could not understand why the example mentioned shows that mankind was exterminated for a robbery involving such a minute amount. According to halachah theft of an amount worth less than a פרוטה, a certain small coin, is not subject to prosecution! I believe that the Midrash wanted to demonstrate that not only were the people of that generation guilty of violating all the seven Noachide commandments, but of something additional. They were sophisticated enough to engage in the kind of theft that was not subject to prosecution because the stolen goods came into their possession indirectly. According to Maimonides chapter nine of Hilchot Melachim even merely withholding wages from a labourer was subject to the death penalty in those days. Nonetheless the people of that generation were astute enough to borrow, i.e. to secure themselves credit and to draw on these credits in amounts of less than the value of the coin mentioned. This did not make them subject to prosecution if they failed to repay the credits. According to others it did not constitute robbery as long as the object was given to them willingly by its owner. Here in our verse the Torah may have alluded to all these kinds of robbery.

6:12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.

RAMBAN

FOR ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED THEIR WAY. If we were to explain all flesh in its usual sense and thus say that even cattle, beasts and fowl corrupted their way by consorting with other species, as Rashi has explained, we must then say that the expression, for the earth is filled with violence through them, does not mean “because of all of them” but only because of some of them [since “violence” does not apply to beasts and cattle], and Scripture tells of the punishment of man alone [even though all flesh corrupted their way]. Or we may say that the cattle, beasts, and fowl also did not follow their natural instincts, and all cattle seized prey and all fowl became birds of prey; thus they too committed violence. By way of the simple meaning of Scripture, all flesh means “all men.” Further on Scripture says explicitly: all flesh wherein is the breath of life; and of every living thing of all flesh, meaning all living bodies. But here it says all flesh, meaning all people. Similarly [we find the verses]: All flesh shall come to worship before Me, [meaning “all people”]; Or when the flesh hath in the skin thereof, [where again reference is only to people].

6:13 And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

RAMBAN

VIOLENCE, that is, robbery and oppression. Now G-d gave Noah the explanation [that the flood was due to the fact that the “the earth is filled with] violence” and did not mention “the corruption of the way” [recorded in the preceding verse] because violence is a sin that is known and widely publicized. Our Rabbis have said that it was on account of the sin of violence that their fate was sealed. The reason for it is that the prohibition against violence is a rational commandment, there being no need for a prophet to admonish them against it. Besides, it is

evil committed against both heaven and mankind. Thus He informed Noah of the sin for which the end is come — the doom is reached.

AND BEHOLD, I WILL DESTROY THEM ‘ETH’ THE EARTH. This is similar to saying “from the earth.” So also: When I go forth ‘eth’ the city, [meaning “from the city”]; he suffered ‘eth’ his feet, [meaning “from his feet”]. Another interpretation is that eth ha’aretz means “with the earth” for even the land was blotted out to the depth of a furrow of three handbreadths. Thus the language of Rashi quoting Bereshith Rabbah. And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that the word mashchitham (destroy them) draws along with it a similar word, [meaning it is as if the verb “destroy” appears twice in the verse], thus stating, “And behold, I will destroy them and destroy the earth.” By way of the truth [the mystic teaching of the Cabala], this is like the verse, eth hashamayim ve’eth ha’aretz (the heaven and the earth), thus intimating that “the earth” will be destroyed, and with the destruction of the earth they too will be destroyed and thus they will be blotted out from the World to Come, just as is intimated in the verse: and it grieved Him at His heart. It is to this that the Rabbis alluded in Bereshith Rabbah: “This is like a master’s son who had a wet-nurse; whenever he would commit an offense the wet-nurse would be punished.”

OR HACHAIM

G’d said: “The end of all flesh, etc. If we accept the sages’ interpretation that the “violence” mentioned here comprised such sins as bloodshed, incest, and idolatry, we can understand the harshness of the retribution. If however, the word חמס refers to robbery with violence (compare Rashi based on Sanhedrin 108), why would the victims of the robbery suffer the same fate as the perpetrators of the crime?

Although one might answer that everybody indulged in robbery, each one according to what he thought he could get away with, our sages (Vayikra Rabbah 23,9) have explained the matter differently when they said that in any society in which sexual licentiousness abounds retribution will strike both the wicked and the good people. Therefore we must understand our verse as saying that though the decree to destroy mankind was sealed because of the prevalence of robbery with violence, the fact that amongst all the sins there were many instances of sexual licentiousness and promiscuity resulted in the retribution including also those who were innocent of robbery. You may ask that all these people could have saved themselves from Divine retribution by each one forgiving the other? As a result of this G’d would not have sealed the evil decree! Perhaps G’d did not want to reveal the effectiveness of mutual forgiveness to anyone but Noah. Noah in turn was not able to reveal this secret to his contemporaries seeing that unless G’d tells a person to communicate revelations made to him to others, such revelations are confidential communications from G’d. One of the reasons G’d did not want this secret revealed to Noah’s contemporaries may have been that they all remained guilty of having committed robbery. The sin of robbery cannot be atoned for by simply offering the sinner your forgiveness without making restitution. Although the Midrash mentioned types of robbery which are not subject to prosecution, these types of robbery were not the only ones perpetrated by the people of Noah’s time. The people of that generation indulged in every form of robbery. Whenever they confronted someone stronger than themselves

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

they resorted to the kind of trickery described by the Midrash. Otherwise they had no qualms about simply grabbing what they fancied.

The reason G'd explained to Noah exactly what sins prompted Him to decree destruction of the species was to motivate him to build the ark so that all living creatures could be preserved until after the deluge.

Next we must explain what prompted Noah not to ask G'd to have mercy on the people of his time (as did Abraham when G'd told him He would destroy Sodom). It appears that Abraham learned from Noah not to bother to ask that G'd spare a city when there were fewer than ten good people in it. Unless he had learned this from Noah, who told Abraham that it would be futile to pray for the survival of a city which contained fewer than ten righteous people?

Noah became convinced from what G'd told him that any prayer of his would be futile, that the fate of these people had been sealed beyond reprieve. All of this is contained in the words: "the end of all flesh has come before Me, here I am about to destroy them." When G'd told Abraham (Genesis 18,20-21) about the sinful nature of the people of Sodom He did not use such kind of language at all. On the contrary, He told Abraham that He was going to examine if what had come to His attention was indeed so, etc. While it is true that in the case of Sodom G'd carried out His decree as soon as He had confirmed the true state of affairs, G'd wanted to demonstrate to Abraham that He does not exercise His power arbitrarily. We have explained in that connection that G'd spoke to Abraham in a manner that invited him to pray on behalf of the doomed cities. Something similar occurred during the episode of the golden calf when G'd proclaimed His intent to wipe out the Jewish people in such a way that Moses saw an opening for his prayer. None of these openings were provided for Noah.

One cannot argue that if G'd did not want Noah to pray for his contemporaries, He did not have to tell Noah what He was going to do and why. G'd needed to tell Noah in order that the latter build the ark. This commandment alone convinced Noah that it would be useless to pray on behalf of the people. Abraham concluded from the fact that Noah and his family were not enough to save the earth from the deluge that fewer than ten good people could not save a town from destruction.

6:14 *Make thee an ark of gofer wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*

OR HACHAIM

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood. In order to understand this verse fully we must refer to Ezekiel 14,14 where the prophet speaks of three men, i.e. Noah, Daniel, and Job who managed to save their own lives due to their personal piety. The prophet there claims that G'd had told him that even if all these three pious men were alive in Jerusalem at that time they could not save the city from disaster though they personally would be saved. The reason all three of these pious men are mentioned is to teach us that even two of them together would not suffice to save themselves at that time in Jerusalem. Some of the earlier commentators wondered that in view of the many pious people who perished during the destruction of the Temple (compare Psalms 79,2 "they have left Your servants' corpses etc."), how was it that if three pious people could have saved themselves that the far more numerous number of pious people who died

during the destruction of the city did not manage to save themselves? One of the answers given is that each pious person may have been scattered amongst many sinners, whereas if three pious persons had stuck together they would certainly have been saved by their merits. This may have been the reason that Noah could only be saved after building the ark, i.e. providing a separate environment for himself. As long as he had been surrounded by his compatriots without a מחיצה, dividing wall, he would have been swept away together with them. If Noah had had a few more pious people with him, he and they would have been saved without the need to construct their own environment. Under such circumstances the verse in Psalms 94,15 עד צדק ישוב משפט, that under certain circumstances righteousness could have reversed judgment, would have been applicable. From the fact that Noah was required to build an ark we learn that his sons did not match him in piety. Had they done so, Noah would not have needed to construct the ark but would have been saved in his own habitat. We need to reconcile this with the words of our sages which I have quoted earlier, and according to which Abraham learned from Noah that it was futile to pray for a city with fewer than ten righteous people to be saved. If Noah was the only righteous man in his generation what could Abraham have learned from this? We must therefore assume that though Noah's sons were righteous they were not perfectly righteous people such as their father. When Abraham prayed about righteous people being able to save a town he meant perfectly righteous people, not those whose good deeds barely outweighed their sins. This is the reason that Ezekiel listed the names of outstandingly righteous men such as Noah, Daniel, and Job. He did not refer to three average type צדיקים. We learn from Ezekiel that once the destructive agents have been given permission by G'd to carry out their function, who and under what circumstances someone can restrain them.

6:17 *And, behold, I will bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is on the earth shall die.*

RAMBAN

AND, BEHOLD, I DO BRING THE FLOOD. "Now I agree with those angels who long ago said to Me [when I was about to create man], What is man that Thou art mindful of him." Thus the words of Rashi quoting Bereshith Rabbah. But I wonder: in what way did He "agree" with them since He left man a remnant for a great deliverance through Noah and his sons and all living things to increase their seed as the sand! Perhaps this agreement with their opinion signified [His intent which was to come to fruition] when He would show them no mercy. [However, when the Divine quality of mercy was introduced, it resulted in the deliverance of mankind through Noah.] By way of the truth [the mystic lore of the Cabala], va'ani (And I) is similar to: And I also will chastise you; so also, I am He! behold, My covenant is with thee; And as for Me, this is My covenant. The verse here thus states: "I also will have My hand on them for having destroyed the earth." This is why He said [after the flood]: This is the token of the covenant which I make. — He maketh sore, and He bindeth up. The learned student [in the mystic lore of the Cabala] will understand.

OR HACHAIM

As far as I am concerned, here I shall bring on a deluge. It is difficult to justify the extra word ואני. Rashi explains it to mean: "I am prepared to concur with those angels who have con-

sidered man as not worth preserving." According to my own approach it simply means that the stage had been reached for G'd to give permission to the destructive agents which had readied themselves to carry out their design. Although the verse specifies only rain, the Zohar has elaborated on the meaning of the word מָבּוּל which would not have been needed had the Torah referred only to rain. This word alludes to the deadly power of the angel of death.

6:18 But with thee will I establish My covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

RAMBAN

AND I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that this is a sign that G-d had sworn to Noah that during the flood, neither he nor his children would die even though it is not clearly written at first. This is similar to what we find in Deuteronomy: And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said: Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us. The meaning of V'hakimothi (And I will establish) is "I will fulfill My oath." It appears likely to me that this covenant mentioned here refers to the rainbow, [Thus G-d hinted to Noah that after the flood He will make a covenant with him if he will fulfill the commandment concerning the making of the ark.] The meaning of the word b'rith (covenant) is an agreement and accord which two have chosen, stemming from the root, 'b'ru' (choose) you. And the word b'rith takes the same form in construct and in separateness. A similar case is [the word sh'vith, captivity]: 'sh'vith' (the captivity of) Jacob; And his daughters 'bash'vith' (in captivity). And some say that the word b'rith means the establishment of a boundary [to which each party to the covenant should adhere]. All these are Abraham ibn Ezra's words. A more correct explanation in line with the simple meaning of Scripture is that the purport of the expression, And I will establish My covenant, is, "At the time of the coming of the flood, My covenant will be established with you so that you and your family and two of all flesh will come into the ark to remain alive, that is to say, so that you will live there and maintain yourself in order to go forth from there alive." And b'rith (covenant) means G-d's word when He decrees something without any condition and residuary and fulfills it. Now He mentions the b'rith and mentions that it will be fulfilled, [which, according to the present interpretation is an apparent redundancy], just as we find the verse, The Jews ordained and took upon them, and upon their seed, meaning they accepted upon themselves a matter which was to exist. [Thus our verse is to be explained in a similar way, i.e., He established an unconditional covenant.] By way of the truth, [the mystic lore of the Cabala], the b'rith is everlasting, the word being derived from. In the beginning G-d 'bara' (created). Thus brithi (My covenant) is similar to b'riyothi (My creation), and the word is alike in construct form because it is adjoined to the times there were before us. He thus commanded that the b'rith exist and be with the righteous one [Noah]. In a similar sense are the verses: As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you; My covenant was with him. The learned student [in the mystic lore of the Cabala] will understand.

OR HACHAIM

I shall fulfil My covenant. Why did G'd not first tell Noah to enter the ark seeing that his survival depended on that? Our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 31,12) say that the covenant in question

was merely that Noah's peers would not kill him when he would enter the ark. In that event it is quite appropriate that the Torah first mentioned G'd as maintaining His covenant with Noah.

An additional meaning maybe that G'd was afraid that Noah would not consider his salvation as a permanent one. He might feel that what was about to occur now might occur again some generations later if mankind did not improve. G'd therefore already hinted to him what He would spell out in more detail after Noah's thanks-giving offering in 8,21. In the meantime Noah had to enter the ark to escape the destruction that would kill all flesh.

G'd may also have wanted to reassure Noah prior to his entering the ark that He would not abandon him during the time it took to sit out the deluge in the ark. Noah should not worry that the ark itself would prove a death trap. This assurance helped Noah as we know from 8,1 where the Torah mentions that G'd remembered Noah during all that time. After this G'd commanded Noah to enter the ark under the protection of this covenant. Although the covenant is not mentioned again in connection with 7,1, G'd relied on His previous assurance to Noah in this regard. The covenant is alluded to again in 8,1 where G'd is reported as "remembering" all those in the ark. Even though Rashi understands G'd as "remembering" Noah's good deeds and the animals refraining from mating while in the ark, this is homiletics and not the plain meaning of the verse.

6:19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

RAMBAN

OF ALL FLESH. It is known that there are a great many beasts, and some of them — such as elephants, rams and others — are very large; likewise, the creeping things upon the earth are very many. Of the fowl of the heaven there are also innumerable many kinds, just as our Rabbis have said: "There are one hundred and twenty kinds of unclean birds in the east, and all of them belong to the species of ayah (kite)." Clean fowl are innumerable. Noah was thus obligated to bring all of them into the ark in order that they may beget their like. If you would gather a full year's supply of food for all of them, [you would find] that this ark and ten others like it could not hold it! But this was a miracle of a small space containing a great quantity. And in case you suppose that he should have made it [the ark] very small and rely on this miracle, the answer is that the Holy One, blessed be He, saw fit to make it large so that the people of his generation should see it, wonder at it, converse about it, and speak of the subject of the flood and the gathering of the cattle, beast, and fowl into it so that perhaps they would repent. Furthermore, he made it large in order to reduce the miracle for such is the way with all miracles in the Torah or in the Prophets: whatever is humanly possible is done, with the balance left to Heaven. Now be not persuaded to say as Ibn Ezra that the three hundred cubits [of the length of the ark were measured] in cubits of a man like Noah, who was unusually tall. If so, the other people were also tall, and the beasts and fowl of those generations were also tall until the world was struck by the flood! Moreover, the cubits here are the standard cubits of the Torah.

THOU SHALT BRING INTO THE ARK, TO KEEP THEM ALIVE WITH THEE. G-d thus commanded Noah that he concern himself with and help them in their entering the ark and that he strive on behalf of their existence even as he would for his own life.

6:20 *Of birds after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every sort shall come to thee, to keep them alive.*

RAMBAN

TWO OF EVERY SORT SHALL COME UNTO THEE, TO KEEP THEM ALIVE. G-d thus informed Noah that two of every sort would come of their own accord, and he would not find it necessary to hunt for them in the mountains and distant lands, and he would bring them into the ark after that. At the actual narration [of their coming, Scripture] explains that they came male and female; this is implied here. After that, He commanded him to take seven and seven of every clean beast. Concerning these, G-d did not say that they would come of their own accord but that Noah should take them. The reason for this is that those who came to be saved and to keep their seed alive did come of their own accord, but for those who were to be sacrificed as whole offerings, G-d did not decree that they come of their own accord to be slaughtered. Rather, Noah took them since the purpose of the command to take seven and seven was that Noah bring a sacrifice from them after the flood. The meaning of the word “clean” is that the Holy One, blessed be He, explained to Noah the signs of ritual cleanliness for beast and fowl. Scripture, however, refers to it briefly by saying, “clean,” in accordance with the Torah. But Rashi wrote: “Clean, meaning that which in the future will be permitted to Israel as clean; we thus learn that Noah studied the Torah.” From here we derive that the sacrifices of the sons of Noah must also be only of the clean beast and the clean fowl. So also it is said of the sacrifice of Abel: of the first-born of his flock and of the fat thereof. However, all clean species are permissible for them to bring as sacrifices as it is written: And he took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. [Later, when the Torah was given, G-d] added a commandment to Israel that all their sacrifices be only of the beasts and of the herd, of the turtledoves and of the young pigeons. Of the fowl also of the heaven, seven and seven — this means the clean fowl for the verse is a continuation of the verse above: [Of every ‘clean’ beast shalt thou take to thee seven and seven].

OR HACHAIM

From the birds according to their kind. It is peculiar that the birds are mentioned before the mammals in this list. If the list is in order of their respective importance, the mammals should have been mentioned first; if the list is in an ascending order the crawling creatures should have been mentioned first. Why does the Torah use this peculiar order? Perhaps the birds enjoy a certain distinction over the mammals because they multiply so profusely. It is interesting that only the “pure” birds multiply so profusely; the 24 categories of “impure” birds which are not fit for consumption by Jews do not multiply as profusely. We have a tradition (Chulin 63?) according to which 120 varieties of birds were found on the Temple Mount, all of which are sub-categories of the אייב, the falcon. At any rate these birds are greatly outnumbered by the “pure” birds. The Torah lists only ten categories of mammals which may be consumed by Jews. Presumably this is the reason the Torah commanded Noah to

have the birds enter the ark ahead of the mammals. The difference in the description of the birds as למיניהו, and the mammals as למיניה, indicates that there were more categories and sub-categories of birds (compare Rashi). The Torah lists the respective categories of creatures, i.e. birds, mammals, and crawling creatures according to their relative mobility.

6:22 *So Noah did according to all that God commanded him; thus he did.*

RAMBAN

AND NOAH DID THUS; ACCORDING TO ALL THAT G-D HAD COMMANDED HIM, meaning that he constructed the ark and gathered the food. Scripture’s intent in saying, And Noah did... so did he, is to explain that he did not omit a thing from all that G-d had commanded him.

שני SECOND ALIYAH

7:1 *And the Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.*

RAMBAN

AND THE ETERNAL SAID TO NOAH. G-d informed Noah that with the attribute of mercy [as indicated by the use of the Tetragrammaton, “the Eternal,”] He will save him and his family and that He will give life to their seed for all generations. This is the meaning of the phrase, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. At first He said, to keep them alive with thee; but now with the attribute of mercy He hinted to him concerning the sacrifice to inform him that he will have regard for his offering and that by the merit of his offering, the world will exist, never again to be cut off by the waters of the flood. This is why the Tetragrammaton is mentioned here for in all matters concerning the sacrifices, Scripture does not mention Elokim (G-d), as I will elucidate when I reach there with the help of G-d.

COME THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE INTO THE ARK. Noah constructed the ark many days before the flood, and when the time of the flood arrived on the tenth day of the second month, He again commanded him that he and all his household come into the ark. This is why He said to him at first: thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee. He thereby informed him that on account of his merit alone they will be saved since He did not say, “Ye [in the plural] I have seen righteous before Me.” And He commanded that he take and bring of the clean beasts and clean fowl seven and seven, and then He informed him of the day of the flood, at which time he was to come into the ark. And Noah did so for in the selfsame day came Noah... into the ark. This is the meaning of [the verse: And Noah came in... into the ark] because of the waters of the flood. But Rashi wrote: “Noah also was one of those who have little faith, and he did not enter the ark until the waters forced him to do so.” In the words of Bereshith Rabbah: “Noah was lacking in faith. Had the waters not reached his ankles he would not have entered the ark.” But if so, let him say that Noah did not enter there until the waters greatly increased and covered the whole face of the earth and he saw that he was drowning!

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

OR HACHAIM

...בא אל התיבה... G'd said...."enter the ark!". Why did G'd have to repeat here that He had seen that Noach was a righteous man in his generation? G'd may have feared that Noach would misinterpret the command to enter the ark together with all his immediate family. He might have thought a) that every family member would be saved due to his or her individual merit; in that case the Torah should not have addressed the command to build the ark to Noach in the singular; b) he might have thought that his wife, children, and their respective wives were being saved because they had not yet reached the age of accountability. If Noach had thought this he might have been tempted to invite all those of his friends who were young enough to share the ark with him in order to survive. Even if he had not done so on his own initiative, he might have wondered why all these youngsters were doomed to perish.

G'd told Noach once more that He had found only him as a righteous person at that time in order to lay to rest any of the other ideas Noach might have had on the subject. He now understood that any youngster who did not have a righteous father was caught in the sins of his father who was punished to die without issue.

The statement of our sages that Jewish minors have a share in the world to come, whereas Gentile minors do not (Kohelet Rabbah 4,1 and Avot de Rabbi Nathan 36,1), may be based on our verse. In Noach's generation everyone was considered an idolator and it was reasonable to assume that the children would take after their fathers. Noach, on the other hand, took a more optimistic view of the possible development of the minors. G'd therefore had to tell him that he could not save any youngsters barring his own.

7:2 *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, male and female: and of beasts that are not clean by twos, male and female.*

OR HACHAIM

Take with you for yourself seven (pairs) each of the pure mammals." The expression *לך תקח* has a dual meaning. 1) He should make the effort to secure these animals as his eventual "payment" [expression of his gratitude to G'd for being saved. Ed.]. The words "for your own self" are therefore justified. If not for this verse we might have asked who had given Noach permission to simply kill these animals? After all, Noach had been commanded to keep the species alive, not to slaughter them! Noach would have reasoned that inasmuch as these categories of beasts are urgently needed for man G'd had commanded to take 7 pairs instead of just a single pair. G'd therefore had to indicate to Noach that the greater number was for his own good, not for the general good. Had Noach simply wanted to slaughter these animals and to eat their meat this too would have been in order.

7:5 *And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him.*

OR HACHAIM

Noach did in accordance with all that G'd commanded him. Rashi comments that this refers to his entering the ark. If that were the meaning there was no need for the Torah's comment as the Torah spells this out in 7,7 as well as 7,13.

I believe that the Torah meant tell us that Noach did indeed take seven pairs each from all the respective categories of pure mammals and pure birds, although the report in 7,8-7,9 does not mention that seven pairs came to the ark of their own accord.

7:8 *Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of birds and of everything that creeps upon the earth,*

RAMBAN

OF CLEAN BEASTS, AND OF BEASTS THAT ARE NOT CLEAN.

TWO AND TWO THERE CAME IN UNTO NOAH. Rashi explained: "They were all equal with respect to this number for the least number of any species was two." Others said that the meaning of "two" is pairs, meaning that they came couplewise, male and female together. In my opinion, the matter was thus: two — a male and a female — came of their own accord from each species, and Noah added by bringing six additional pairs from the clean ones since those that came to be saved arrived of their own accord while he busied himself for the sake of the commandment with those that were destined for sacrifice, for so it was told to him. And the meaning of the verse, And Noah did according unto all that the Eternal commanded him, is, as the Rabbis have said in Bereshith Rabbah, that he was to prepare to bring in the cattle, beast, and fowl, meaning the clean ones, those which he himself went after and brought to his house. The verse which states a third time, as G-d hath commanded Noah, means that he did as He had commanded him concerning entering the ark, for this verse is connected with the above verse: And Noah came in. The verse thus states that Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives came into the ark along with two and two of the cattle and fowl and creeping things that came to him in order to enter into the ark. All of them came with him, entering the ark because of the waters of the flood, as G-d commanded him. Scripture then returns and sets forth the month and the day in which the flood came and how he entered the ark, stating that on that selfsame day when the rains began — and not before — Noah entered the ark, and with him were all living things.

7:9 *there went in two and two to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.*

OR HACHAIM

They came to Noah in pairs . The Torah points out that these animals came of their own volition; Noah did not have to search for them or catch them. One of the reasons the Torah does not mention seven pairs of pure animals here is that only the number of animals that came to the ark to maintain their species are mentioned here. G'd guided them to the ark and Noah admitted them. The additional animals that served as *תשלום*, payment, Noah had to provide himself. You find this confirmed in verse 15 when the animals that came to the ark are specifically described as being only pairs.

7:15 *And they went in to Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh in which is the breath of life.*

RAMBAN

AND THEY CAME IN UNTO NOAH INTO THE ARK. The intent of this is to make known that the beasts, fowl, etc., did not gather to him at all, nor did they come until that selfsame day when

the rains came. And he came into the ark for it was G-d that hath commanded and His breath which hath gathered them in one moment.

7:16 *And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.*

RAMBAN

AND THEY THAT CAME IN, CAME IN MALE AND FEMALE OF ALL FLESH. The intent of this is that those who came into the ark were male and female for so Noah brought them in. This is why Scripture says, as G-d hath commanded him, since it was He who commanded him to bring them into the ark. But the opinion of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra is that the verse, And Noah came in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, does not mean that they entered it but that they all came to Noah on the tenth day of the second month for his house was near the ark. [He thus interprets the verse as meaning "to the ark," rather than "into the ark."] Ibn Ezra explains the phrase, because of the waters of the flood, to mean "on account of the fear of the waters of the flood." At the end of the seven days came the waters of the flood, and then they all gathered in the ark, and Noah closed the door and the window. But Ibn Ezra's words are not correct. It is possible that the verses, And Noah did according to all that the Eternal hath commanded him, And Noah was six hundred years old, and the succeeding verses until, In the six hundredth year, do not recount a narrative. Rather, And Noah did according to all that the Eternal commanded him generalizes the entire matter. It states that he did everything as he was commanded, not omitting a thing: he constructed the ark and assembled the food and took of the clean beasts and fowl seven and seven on the day He commanded him. When he was six hundred years old and the flood came down upon the earth, he came with his household and with the clean beasts and all living things into the ark, as G-d had commanded him. After that, Scripture narrates the event, And it came to pass after the seven days ... in the six hundredth year, and completes the subject.

שלישי THIRD ALIYAH

7:18 *And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.*

RAMBAN

AND THE WATERS PREVAILED ('Vayigb'ru'). **AND THE WATERS 'GAVRU'** (PREVAILED). This means that they increased exceedingly, for the Hebrew language calls great abundance gvurah (strength, power). So too, And their transgressions which 'yithgavru' (have prevailed), meaning increased exceedingly; His mercy 'gavar' (has prevailed) toward them that fear Him, meaning increased. And so also: If 'bigvuroth' four-score years, meaning with great abundance. It is conceivable that the meaning of vayigb'ru is that the rains came in a rushing down-pour, uprooting trees and toppling buildings, since power is called in Hebrew gvurah (strength) because strength lies in power. In a similar sense are the verses: They also 'gavru' (wax mighty) in power; 'Vehigbir brith' (And he shall make a strong covenant) with many for one week, meaning he will establish the covenant with firmness. And in the words of the Sages, [we find the expression], gvuroth geshamim (the powers of the rains), because they come down with strength. It is possible

that the verse, If 'bigvuroth' four-score years, is of the same sense, i.e., if his bones and body be strong, and he is a man of power, he will live four-score years. And if so, 'gavru' upon the earth will mean that the waters were in their complete strength, overcoming even the high mountains and inundating them.

7:23 *And He destroyed every living substance which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and the birds of the heaven; they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.*

RAMBAN

AND HE BLOTTED OUT EVERY LIVING SUBSTANCE WHICH WAS UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. After having said, And all flesh perished, and having said, whatever was in the dry land, died, Scripture continues to say, And He blotted out, meaning that the bodies dissolved and became water, just as is in the verse, And he shall blot them out in the water of bitterness — for the waters of the flood were hot, as our Rabbis have said. But if so, the fish also would have died. Perhaps it was as the Rabbis have said in Bereshith Rabbah: "Whatever was in the dry land died, but not the fish in the sea. And some authorities say that they too were destined to be destroyed, but they fled to the Mediterranean." Either way the fish were saved. Both of these opinions are plausible. For it is conceivable that the hot waters of the flood mingled with the seas, heating only their upper waters, while the fish descended to the depths of the ponds and lived there. Or, in accordance with the opinion of some authorities, it is possible that the fish in the waters of the countries near the Mediterranean fled there when they felt the heat of the water, and were thus saved. And even if all those outside the Mediterranean died, since the majority of fish are in the Mediterranean where the waters of the flood did not come down — as it is said, And the rain was upon the earth — the fish were thus saved. For none of the fish were brought into the ark to keep their seed alive, and at the time of the covenant it is said, I establish My covenant with you... and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, and cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, but it does not mention the fish of the sea.

AND THEY WERE BLOTTED OUT FROM THE EARTH. The commentators have explained that the reason for the double [expression, And He blotted out ... and they were blotted out], is that their remembrance was forgotten since they had no seed. But what need is there to say that after we are told that they all died? Perhaps on account of the fowl and some creeping things, Scripture tells that none of their eggs were left on any tree or under the earth for everything was blotted out. It is probable that the sense of the verse is as follows: "And He blotted out every living substance which was upon the face of the earth, for from man to beast to creeping things and to fowl of the heaven, they were blotted out from the earth, only Noah remaining alive." Now our Rabbis have expounded: "And He blotted out, meaning from this world. And they were blotted out from the earth, meaning from the World to Come." The Rabbis thus explained "the earth" mentioned here as meaning "the land of eternal life." I have already alluded to its secret.

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

OR HACHAIM

He dissolved all life. Not only did all living creatures of the earth (dry land) die, as pointed out in verse 21, but their remains dissolved completely due to the heat of the waters. No trace of them was left. This verse also enables us to understand the comment of Rabbi Ami in Eyrubin 18 on Psalms 139,5: אָחֹר וקֵדָם, צֵרָתִי, וְתִשָּׁת עָלַי כַּפְכָּה "You have made me before and behind; You lay Your hand upon me." Rabbi Ami understood this to mean that Adam was created at the end of the whole process of creation whereas the word קֵדָם refers to "prior to the curse." Rabbi Ami meant that man disintegrated before the curse, i.e. before all the animals' bodies dissolved. He referred to man dying ahead of the animals during the deluge. Who needed Rabbi Ami to tell us something that the Torah has already spelled out in 7,23? Actually, when you look at verse 21 you notice that the death of the creatures is reported in the reverse order, i.e. first the animals, then the human beings. According to our interpretation there is no contradiction here. Whereas verse 21 discusses the timing of the deaths, verse 23 discusses the dissolution of the remains of the dead creatures. Man's remains dissolved first though he had died last.

8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters were assuaged;

RAMBAN

AND G-D REMEMBERED NOAH, AND EVERY LIVING THING, AND ALL THE CATTLE. The remembrance of Noah was because he was a perfectly righteous man, and He had made a covenant with him to save him. The word "Noah" here includes his children that were there with him. Scripture did not mention them specifically, though, for they were saved by his merit. However, the remembrance stated concerning beast and cattle was not on account of merit, for among living creatures there is no merit or guilt save in man alone. But the remembrance concerning them was Because He remembered His holy word which He had spoken, causing the world to come into existence, and the Will which was before Him at the creation of the world arose before Him and He desired the existence of the world with all the species that He created therein. Thus He now saw fit to bring them forth so that they should not perish in the ark. Scripture does not mention the fowl and the creeping things for the remembrance of the living thing is similar to their remembrance, and the companion thereof telleth concerning it.

OR HACHAIM

G'd remembered Noah. The reason the Torah was not content to mention that G'd remembered Noah but added that He remembered all the beasts that were in the ark with him may have been that the animals by themselves already warranted that G'd should remember them.

Another reason is that the Torah includes in that statement that G'd considered all the hard and menial work Noah was subjected to in looking after all the animals under his care. G'd had pity on Noah. The Torah wanted to emphasise that G'd's major concern was Noah and not the animals.

G'd made a wind pass over the earth and the waters subsided. The Torah here wishes to tell us that G'd had commanded the waters to become tumultuous just as He had commanded the waters during the six days of creation to swarm with fish, etc. Here G'd commanded the waters to conduct themselves with

their full power; as a result of that the remains of the creatures which had died disintegrated completely. Had it not been for this fact there would have been no point in verse 24 telling us that the waters swelled on earth for 150 days. After all, the remains of all creatures had already disintegrated previously. Until G'd remembered Noah (our verse) the waters had no reason to act differently than the instructions they had received from G'd.

8:2 the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped,

OR HACHAIM

The wells of the deep closed up. The Torah here hints that the waters beneath the earth had risen in proportion to the rain descending from the heavens. These two phenomena go hand in hand. Our verse alludes to this fact by mentioning the withdrawal of the waters beneath the earth as occurring simultaneously with the cessation of the rain from the heavens. We have pointed out previously that these two types of waters complement each other, enabling growth to occur (Ta'anit 28).

8:3 and the rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters receded from the earth continually: and after the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

OR HACHAIM

The waters retreated from the earth's surface. The waters which had flooded the earth kept retreating towards the oceans. They decreased naturally, starting 150 days after the onset of the deluge.

8:4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

RAMBAN

AND THE ARK RESTED IN THE SEVENTH MONTH, ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH. Rashi wrote: "From here you may infer that the ark was submerged in the water to a depth of eleven cubits." This he wrote on the basis of the calculation written in his commentaries, and it is so found in Bereshith Rabbah. But since in certain places Rashi minutely examines Midrashic traditions and for the same verses also takes the trouble to explain the simple meanings of Scripture, he has thus given us permission to do likewise for there are seventy ways of interpreting the Torah, and there are many differing Midrashim among the words of the Sages. And so I say that this calculation which they have mentioned does not fit into the language of Scripture unless we bear with that which explains And the ark rested in the seventh month as referring to that day mentioned above [in Verses 2-3] when the rain was withheld and the waters receded from the earth and decreased continually. [This interpretation of the seventh month is] unlike the counting of the second month mentioned in the beginning of the section, [which Rashi explains there as being "the second month" of the creation calendar], and unlike the counting stated at the end of the section [in Verse 13: in the first month, which Rashi similarly explains as being "the first month" of the creation calendar]! And how is it possible that in the second verse Scripture should immediately retract [from using the withholding of the rain as a reference point for counting] and state, until the tenth month, and proceed to another reference point, counting it, as Rashi explains, as the tenth month with reference to the com-

ing of the rains! The evidence Rashi brings from the submergence of the ark in the waters is no proof for he attributes an equal decrease of water to each of the days — namely, a cubit every four days — and it is known in nature concerning the decrease of water that a great river which decreases at first a cubit every four days will at the end decrease four cubits in a day. Thus according to this calculation of Rashi, on the first day of the month of Ab the tops of the mountains were seen, and on the first day of Tishri the earth dried. Thus in sixty days the waters decreased the entire height of the high mountains consisting of many thousands of cubits, [surely a greater rate than four cubits a day, as Rashi would have it!] Besides, when Noah sent forth the dove on the seventeenth day of the month of Ellul, the waters were yet on the face of the entire earth, and the trees were covered, and in a matter of twelve days the whole earth dried! And by way of reason, if the ark was submerged in the waters eleven cubits, that being more than a third of its height [which was thirty cubits], it would have sunk because it was wide at the bottom and finished to a cubit at the top, contrary to the structure of ships, and there was also in it great weight! From the simple interpretation of Scripture it appears that the hundred and fifty days mentioned in connection with the prevailing of the waters include the forty days of the coming down of the rains since the main increase and prevailing of the waters took place during these days. Thus the waters began decreasing on the seventeenth day of Nisan, and thirty days later — the seventeenth day of the month Iyar, which was the seventh month from the time the rain began to fall — the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. Seventy-three days later, on the first of Ab, which was the tenth month from the time the rain began to fall, the tops of the mountains were seen. We have thus made a small correction in the interpretation of the language of Scripture, [namely, that all counting begins from the time the rain began to fall]. But the correct interpretation appears to me to be that the hundred and fifty days were from the seventeenth day of the second month, namely, the month of Marcheshvan, to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, namely, the month of Nisan, and that was the day when the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. For then G-d caused a strong east wind to pass all the night and made the waters dry land, meaning that they decreased very much, and the ark rested. The proof for this is that Scripture does not say here, “and the waters decreased on such a month and on such a day and the waters decreased continually until the seventh month, and the ark rested, etc.,” as it said concerning the other decrease when the tops of the mountains were seen, for on the very day the waters began decreasing, the ark rested. The order of events in this matter was thus: on the day the rain began to fall all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of the heavens were opened and the rain came down for forty days. During that time the waters prevailed fifteen cubits above [the summits of all the mountains]. The rain stopped at the end of forty days, but “the fountains of the deep” and “the windows of the heavens” remained open. The atmosphere was very damp, and the whole earth was full of water, not like waters poured down a precipice, nor ever to become dried. And they stood thus in their power until one hundred and fifty days from the day the rain began were completed. Then G-d caused a very powerful wind to pass through the heavens and over the earth, and the fountains of the deep were stopped for the water that flowed from them returned to its place until the deep filled up as it was before the flood, and the openings of its fountains were locked,

as were “the windows of the heavens.” And the air was dried very much by a drying wind, and the water on the earth was licked up. Thus the waters decreased exceedingly on that day, and the ark, which was submerged in the waters about two to three cubits, rested. Seventy-three days after that — on the first day of the tenth month, namely, the month of Tammuz — the tops of the mountains were seen. At the end of forty additional days — on the tenth day of the eleventh month, Ab — Noah opened the window of the ark, and three weeks later the dove left him; thirty days later, he removed the covering of the ark.

AND G-D MADE A WIND TO PASS OVER THE EARTH. This means that there was a great and powerful wind coming out from the bowels of the earth over the face of the deep and hovering over the waters, and the fountains of the deep were stopped thereby. This is so since Scripture does not say, “and G-d made a wind to pass over the waters.”

AND THE WATERS ASSUAGED (‘VAYASHOKU’). This means that the waters which were flowing from the deep subsided. It is the same expression as, Then the king’s wrath ‘shachachah’ (assuaged), meaning that his anger subsided. Or it may be that this is an expression of a thing being concealed and swallowed up. Thus the verse teaches that the waters of the deep were swallowed up in their place. And so did the Rabbis say in Seder Olam: “The waters that went up were dried by the wind, and those that went down were swallowed in their place.”

AND THE RAINS FROM THE HEAVENS WERE WITHHELD. This means that no more rain came down until they [Noah and his family and all living creatures] went out of the ark for by this wind [which G-d made to pass over the earth] the heavens became as iron. Neither dew nor rain came down, the air lost its moisture, and the waters dried up for the rain of the flood completely stopped after the fortieth day.

AND THE WATERS RETURNED FROM OFF THE EARTH CONTINUALLY. The verse states that the waters decreased gradually until the face of the ground was dried up. And after the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. This is connected with the following verse, And the ark rested, thus stating that on that day there was a great decrease in the waters which enabled the ark to rest [on the mountains of Ararat], as I have explained.

8:5 *And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.*

RAMBAN

AND THE WATERS DECREASED CONTINUALLY UNTIL THE TENTH MONTH. This verse is to be interpreted by transposition: the waters decreased continually until the tops of the mountains were seen in the tenth month, which is the month of Tammuz. Scripture thus informs us that during seventy-three days the waters decreased fifteen cubits. But we do not know the amount of the original decrease which enabled the ark to rest since Scripture did not find it necessary to inform us either of the number of cubits that the ark was submerged in the waters or of the amount of the decrease. In the matter of the floating of the ark, it appears to me that because the waters flowed from the deeps and were hot, as our Rabbis have said, the ark therefore floated upon the face of the waters. Were it not for that, it would have sunk on account of its weight for there were many living things in it, as well as a great deal of food and drink. But

as soon as the waters subsided from their flowing or from their heat and they decreased on account of the wind, the ark at once entered into the midst of the waters due to the weight of its load, and it rested on the mountain. In the opinion of the commentators, the Scriptural accounts concerning the total of one hundred and fifty days during which the waters prevailed, the resting of the ark, the visibility of the tops of the mountains and the succeeding forty days — all these events we know by way of prophecy for Scripture so informs us, but Noah knew only that he felt that the ark had rested, and he waited a period of time which, in his opinion, was sufficient for the waters to abate. Now according to our words, as well as those of our Rabbis and all commentators, the mountains of Ararat, which are among the highest mountains under the heavens, had fifteen cubits of water above their summit. Therefore this difficulty is to be posed: it is known that the Greek mountain Olympus is very much higher than they, and the land of Ararat, which is near Babylon, lies in the lower part of the globe! Perhaps we should then say that the decrease of waters which took place on the seventeenth day of the seventh month was very much more than fifteen cubits, and at first the tops of the high mountains were seen, not the mountains of Ararat, and it just happened that the ark was in the land of Ararat during the seventh month and it rested on the tops of those mountains. Now Noah, from the time the rains ceased, would open and close the window at his will. Seventy-three days after the resting of the ark he looked forth from the window and the tops of the mountains of Ararat were visible to him, and he again closed the window. Scripture then relates that forty days later he sent forth the raven. Scripture does not say, “and it was in such-a-month and on such-a-day that Noah opened the window,” but instead it says, And it came to pass at the end of forty days, in order to declare that from the time the tops of the mountains were seen by Noah, he waited forty days for he thought that by then the towers would be seen and the trees would become visible and the fowls would thus find in them a place to nest, and so he opened the window in order to send forth the raven. In the first month, which is the month of Tishri, the waters were dried up, and in the second month, which is the month of Marcheshvan, on the twenty-seventh day thereof, was the earth dry, and on that day they went out of the ark. Thus all calculations of the section are in accordance with the simple explanation of Scripture and its usual sense. Know that after the Sages agreed that it was in the month of Tishri that the world was created — as [is evidenced by the text of the prayer for the New Year which] they formulated, i.e., “This day, on which was the beginning of Thy work, is a memorial of the first day,” and by the fact that the Scriptural order of the seasons is seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat — that the beginning of the year is reckoned from Tishri. And so also were the months reckoned from Tishri until we reached the exodus from Egypt. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to reckon the months according to another count, [namely, from the going forth from Egypt, which occurred in the month of Nisan], as it is said, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Thenceforth in all of Scripture, Tishri is reckoned as the seventh month. But as far as the years are concerned, the reckoning from Tishri was still retained, as it is written, And the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year. And so did Jonathan the son of Uziel translate the verse, In the month of Eithanim which is the seventh month, saying, “in the month which the ancients called the first month and which is

now the seventh month.” And in the Mechilta we also find: “This month [Nisan] shall be unto you. But the first man did not reckon by it; [he reckoned Tishri as the first month].”

OR HACHAIM

The waters kept ebbing away. Part of the water retreated whereas part still flooded the earth until the tenth month.

8:6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

OR HACHAIM

It was at the end of a period of forty days. How did Noah know when the time had come to safely open the window? Was he not scared the surrounding waters would flood the ark? Perhaps G'd had told him that the deluge would not last longer than twelve months and he had prepared a food supply to last for that period of time.

8:7 and he sent forth the raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

OR HACHAIM

He sent away the raven. Why did Noah send away the raven? If it was to examine if the waters had receded sufficiently, why does the Torah not mention this? If the Torah assumed that we could figure this out for ourselves, why did the Torah mention the reason for Noah sending out the dove? What exactly is the meaning of: “it went to and fro until the water on the earth dried out?” If the meaning is that the raven could not find a place to rest outside the ark and that therefore it kept re-entering the ark and leaving anew, why was there a need to send out a dove altogether? Did not the raven's behaviour indicate that the waters had not yet eased sufficiently? What exactly does the Torah mean by the words *עד יבשת המים*? Furthermore, did Noah not have sufficient information once he sent out the dove? Why does the Torah not mention that Noah extended his hand to bring the raven back, just as it does in connection with the dove in verse 9?

The entire verse must be understood in light of the aggadah (Sanhedrin 108) that the raven mated while in the ark and that Noah knew about it. This is why he expelled the raven from the ark as soon as he opened its window. This is why the Torah does not mention that the raven was despatched in order to examine the extent to which the waters had receded. The raven was forced to remain outside the ark though it tried to return to it. This situation continued until the waters on the earth had dried out. When Noah wanted to know how far the waters had receded he sent out the dove. He had not been able to find this out from the raven which he had expelled. The dove was willing to undertake the mission of relaying information to Noah. Initially, the dove reported that it had not been able to find a place to rest. As soon as Noah heard this he took the dove back into the ark with him. The detailed wording of verse 9 suggests that Noah made a special place in the ark for the dove. Later on Noah sent out the same dove a second time.

Our sages derived another lesson from the wording of this verse when they stated (Sanhedrin 108) that the raven used an iron-clad argument when it accused both G'd and Noah of hating it. It said: “G'd hates me because only a single pair of my species has been allowed into the ark whereas the “pure” birds are represented by seven pairs. You hate me because you endangered me instead of one of the birds of which there are seven pairs.”

The raven went on to suspect Noah of personal motives in sending it on a mission so that Noah could have relations with its mate. Noah was very angry, telling the raven that since he refrained from having inter-course with his own wife in the ark he most certainly would not dream of mating with a species that was forbidden to him. According to this aggadah the raven refused to undertake the mission Noah wanted to assign to it for fear of its species becoming extinct should anything happen to it outside the ark. As a result, Noah had to send the dove on the mission originally planned for the raven. The raven's very fear and constant circling of the ark told Noah that the waters were still covering most of the earth. What Noah did not know was whether the water level on earth was already substantially lower. He sent out the dove to find out this information.

The deeper meaning of the aggadah depicting the raven's confrontation with Noah can be understood in terms of Psalms 69:27: "For they persecute those whom You have struck." Normally, those who have been persecuted can expect to encounter mercy and pity. The people who persecute Jews in exile heap more suffering on those already in unfortunate circumstances. This was basically the raven's argument against Noah when it said: "is it not enough that Your Master hates me, must you hate me also?" The raven continued: "if you are not motivated by hatred of me, do you have designs on my mate and wish me out of the way?" The raven implied that precisely because Noah was not allowed to have sexual relations with his wife in the ark, he might have reasoned that he could have relations with other species. There is no reason to question why the raven's mate should be different from any other female animal. The raven's argument applied to all female animals, but seeing the others remained under their mates' supervision Noah would not be able to carry out such a design unseen. Only the female raven would be unprotected during its mate's absence from the ark.

The raven may also have extrapolated from the very fact that it had been guilty of mating in the ark. It reasoned that the fact that Noah had seen this take place had aroused his instincts. Our sages have always claimed that watching something arouses one's greed and lust to possess the object one has watched. This is why the sages have been so careful to forbid looking at parts of the body. Noah was angry at the raven for having referred to G'd only as Noah's "Master," not its own. This is why he called the raven "wicked." Concerning the suspicion that Noah had designs on the raven's mate, Noah retorted that seeing he had been able to restrain himself from sleeping with his own wife, something which was only a simple prohibition, he could certainly restrain himself from sleeping with the raven's mate, something that involved violating two prohibitions.

Another reason that prompted Noah to call the raven "wicked" in that aggadah is that Noah applied the principle כל הפוסל במומו פוסל, that "when someone accuses others of moral shortcomings, he usually accuses the outsider of a moral defect that he himself is guilty of" (Kidushin 70). Noah told the raven it could never have suspected him of what it did unless it was guilty of such misdemeanours itself. The reason the Talmud describes the raven's argument as נִיצָחַת, ironclad, is that Noah could not answer why he had picked for this mission a bird of which there was only a single pair.

Another reason why Noah called the raven wicked could be that seeing it had impregnated its mate already, the species would not die out even if some accident were to befall the male raven on its mission. Its very wickedness therefore had made the raven the only expendable bird.

8:9 but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned to him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put out his hand, and took her, and pulled her in to him into the ark.

RAMBAN

AND THE DOVE FOUND NO REST. It is not customary for fowl to rest on the tops of the high mountains on the earth which are bare of trees and surely not when the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Therefore, the dove found no rest suitable for her. But as soon as she saw the trees she went her own way for in their branches she would build her nest.

OR HACHAIM

He extended his hand, took her (the dove) and brought her to him into the ark. The verse tells us that the dove was exhausted from its mission, not having found a place to land. Noah was worried that the dove did not have strength enough to enter the ark on her own and would fall into the water and drown.

8:11 and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

RAMBAN

AND LO AN OLIVE LEAF. From the plain meaning of this verse it would appear that the trees were not uprooted or blotted out in the flood because there was there no flooding stream since the whole world became full of water. But in Bereshith Rabbah the Rabbis have said, "From where did the dove bring the olive leaf? Rabbi Levi said, 'She brought it from the Mount of Olives since the land of Israel was not inundated by the waters of the flood. This is as the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the prophet Ezekiel: Son of man, say unto her: Thou art a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.' Rabbi Biryai said, 'The gates of the garden of Eden were opened for the dove and from there she brought the leaf.'" Thus the intent of the Rabbis is that the trees were uprooted and blotted out in those places where the flood was, and surely the leaf faded. Similarly the Rabbis said, "Even the [solid substance of the] lower stationery millstone was blotted out in the flood," and [to substantiate this statement] they expounded the verse, The waters wore the stones, [as referring to the waters of the flood which wore down stones]. And their saying that "the Land of Israel was not inundated by the flood" is to be understood as meaning that the rain of the flood was not there, as it is written, nor rained upon; the fountains of the great deep were not therein. But the waters did spread over the whole world, and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered, as it is clearly written, and there is no partition around the Land of Israel to prevent the waters from entering. And so did the Sages say in Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer: "The waters of the flood did not come down from heaven upon the land of Israel, but they rolled in from other lands and came there, as it is said, Son of man, say unto her, etc." Now according to the opinion of Rabbi Levi, [mentioned above, that the dove brought the olive leaf from the Mount of Olives], it was because the torrential rain did not

come down upon the land of Israel and the windows of heaven were not opened there that the trees remained there while in the rest of the world they were broken and uprooted by the flood and His mighty rain. But I wonder about their saying that [the olive leaf was brought by the dove] from the garden of Eden. If it were so, then Noah did not know that the waters abated from off the earth for there [in Eden] the waters of the flood did not enter. But perhaps its gates were closed so that the waters did not enter there, but when the waters abated they were opened. [Thus the olive leaf indicated the opening of the gates which in turn indicated that the waters had abated.] It is on the basis of this opinion of theirs [—that the trees were broken and uprooted in the entire world during the flood — that the Rabbis] have said there in Bereshith Rabbah, “And he [Noah] planted a vineyard. And from where did he have a branch? Said Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, ‘When he went into the ark he had taken with him branches of the vine, shoots of fig trees, and stumps of olive trees.’”

‘TARAPH’ (PLUCKED) IN HER MOUTH. Rashi wrote: “I am of the opinion that the dove was a male and that therefore Scripture sometimes speaks of it as masculine and sometimes as feminine because where the word yonah (dove) occurs in Scripture it is spoken of as feminine. Taraph however means ‘he plucked.’ But a Midrashic explanation takes it [taraph] as meaning ‘food,’ and the word b’phiha (in her mouth) it explains as meaning ‘speaking.’ Thus she said: ‘Rather that my food be bitter as an olive and come by the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, than as sweet as honey and from the hand of mortal man.’” All this does not appear to me to be correct for there is no reason why Scripture should change its reference to doves from feminine to masculine in one place in the same section. And if it is proper language to always speak of yonah in Scripture as feminine, why did it change here? Similarly, their Midrashic explanation does not at all make the word b’phiha to mean “speaking.” Instead, their Midrash is based on the fact that she brought this kind of leaf for if we should say that it just happened [that she brought an olive leaf], it cannot be in vain that Scripture mentioned it since it should have said, “And, lo, in her mouth a leaf freshly plucked.” Besides, the olive does not come from the very high trees that the fowl should nest there on account of its long branches. It was for this reason that the Sages said that there was in this a hint that it is more pleasing to the fowl to have their food bitter as wormwood from the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, and not have it be good and sweet as honey from the hand of mortal man, and surely, all the more, people do not wish to be dependent for their livelihood upon one another. In the words of Bereshith Rabbah: “Rabbi Abahu said, ‘If the dove brought the olive leaf from the garden of Eden, could she not have brought something exceptional such as either cinnamon or balsam? But it was a hint which she gave to Noah: rather something even more bitter than this from the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, than something sweet from your hand.’” But in the Gemara they [the Sages] added: “What evidence is there that the word taraph means food? It is written, ‘Hatripheni’ (Feed me) with mine allotted bread.” It is due to the reason we have stated, [namely, that Scripture mentioned the name of the tree in order to indicate this hint] for which the Rabbis found support in the word hatripheni, implying that it is as if Scripture said, “And, lo, an olive-leaf of tereph (food) in her mouth.” As for the plain meaning of Scripture, the commentators have explained that the word taraph modifies the word “leaf,” thus stating, “And, lo, a plucked olive leaf was in her

mouth.” Proof for this [i.e., that taraph modifies “leaf” rather than acting as a verb] is that taraph is wholly vocalized with the kamatz, as is the rule. It is, however, found in irregular forms: For ‘taraph’ (He hath torn), and He will heal us; And he shall restore that which ‘gazel’ (he took by robbery); The error which ‘shagag’ (he committed); and many other additional verses.

רביעי FOURTH ALIYAH

8:16 Go out of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons’ wives with thee.

OR HACHAIM

Leave the ark, you and your wife, etc. The wording was intended to permit Noah what had been forbidden to him while he was in the ark, namely normal relations with his wife. G’d also commanded all the other species to resume multiplying. G’d made this resumption of sexual relations dependent on Noah and the other species having left the ark. Even though the deluge was over, normalcy returned only after they all left the ark. All of this is indicated again by the report in the next verse that the males and the females exited from the ark separately. There was no point in telling us this except to teach us that the ark was not a home, but only a refuge.

8:21 And the Lord smelled the sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the impulse of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.

RAMBAN

AND THE ETERNAL SAID IN HIS HEART. He did not reveal the matter to a prophet at that time, but on the day He commanded Moses concerning the writing of the Torah He revealed to him that as Noah brought his sacrifice it mounted pleasingly, and He decreed that He will no more smite every living thing. In this regard, I have already written of a secret hinted at by our Rabbis. The sense of the expression, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake is that they were punished because of him for if man had not sinned, they have been spared even though they had also corrupted their ways.

FOR THE IMAGINATION OF MAN’S HEART IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH. He ascribes merit to men because by their very creation they have an evil nature in their youthful days but not in their mature years. If so, for these two reasons, it is not proper to smite every living thing. The reason for the prefix mem [which signifies “from” in the word] min’urav (from his youth) is to indicate that the evil imagination is with men from the very beginning of their youth, just as the Rabbis have said: “From the moment he awakes to go forth from his mother’s womb the evil impulse is placed in him.” It is possible that the verse is saying that it is from youth — meaning, on account of youth — that the evil inclination is in man, for youth causes him to sin. And some say that it is as if it said “in his youth,” [min’urav being interpreted as if it were bin’urav]. Similarly we find ‘Miterem’ (Before) a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Eternal, [where the word miterem is interpreted as betarem]; so too, This is the land which ye shall divide ‘minachlah’ (by lot) unto the tribes of Israel, [where minachlah is interpreted as benachlah].

OR HACHAIM

G'd said to His heart: "I will not continue to curse, etc. Why does G'd use the words לא אוסיף twice in the same verse? Rashi claims that the repetition makes the statement equivalent to an oath. He bases himself on Shavuot 36. This poses a problem, seeing that the sages do not really say this. This is the text of the Talmud: Rabbi Eliezer said the word לא is a term used as an oath; the word הן is also a term used as an oath; Rabbi Eliezer quotes some verse as proof. Rava corrects his statement by saying that only when these words are used twice do they constitute an oath. Rava quotes Genesis 9,11 ממי ולא יכרת כל בשר עוד ממי ולא יחיה עוד מכול, all flesh will not again be annihilated by the waters of the deluge, nor will there ever be another flood, as proof for his rule. The fact that Rava quotes this verse and not 8,21 shows that he means two separate verses or statements are needed. The single verse in 8,21 does not constitute an oath according to the Talmud.

The Talmud is quite correct in not using the repeated words לא אוסיף as an oath where G'd is reported as saying this "to His heart." In that verse the words לא אוסיף were applied to two different undertakings by G'd. He promised not to curse the earth, and He promised not to curse all the living creatures. It would not be proper to speak of a repetition then. What G'd undertook in this verse was not to punish the earth again on account of man's deeds as He had done when Adam sinned and when Cain sinned. Not even a part of the earth would henceforth be cursed on account of man's actions or inactions. In addition G'd expressed His satisfaction with Noah's sacrifice and promised not to smite whole categories of creatures even when this did not involve destroying their habitat. It is clear then that there is no oath here since G'd did not repeat anything. That is why Rava in the Talmud uses the verse in 9,11 as an example of an oath. We will explain that verse in detail in its proper place. Perhaps Rashi had a different version of the Talmud as suggested by the commentary of the ראש on that folio.

We still need to supply a reason why the verse once mentions the curse before the word עוד, i.e. לא אוסיף לקלל עוד, whereas in the second half of the verse the sequence is להכות עוד ולא אוסיף עוד already appearing before the predicate of the sentence. The reason is that a curse directed at the earth already has a past history, i.e. earth has been cursed before and the effects of that curse still existed. When G'd curses living creatures there is no noticeable effect of any previous curse as any living creatures that had been cursed or smitten prior to the present curse were already dead and as if they had never existed. Our verse incorporates this nuance. It reminds us that the earth was still suffering from the effect of previous curses.

for the inclination of man's heart is evil from its youth. This statement is best understood as similar to the Talmud Baba Kama 39. The Talmud discusses an incidence in which a bull trained to perform in an arena has gored someone. Such an animal is not subject to the death penalty as it only did what it was expected to do. The reason cited in that Mishnah is that the Torah uses the future tense יגזל in Exodus 21,28 when providing the death penalty for oxen which gore a human being. Animals which have been trained to do just that are not culpable for doing what comes naturally. Similarly, man, equipped as he is with an evil instinct from birth, is not culpable until he has learned to distinguish right from wrong. This rule applies to minors not being subject to the judiciary process. They are, however, punishable by G'd for not having heeded His call. In

that respect man is not like the bull we mentioned. Man's advantage over the beasts is his knowledge of good and evil. He is charged with despising evil and choosing what is good. The fact that man was born with the יצר הרע only, acts like an extenuating circumstance protecting him against G'd's anger.

9:3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

RAMBAN

EVERY 'REMES' (MOVING THING) THAT LIVETH. This refers to cattle, beasts and fowl — and also the fish in the sea — since all of them are called "moving things," just as it is written: Every living creature 'haromeseth' (that creepeth) wherewith the waters swarmed.

OR HACHAIM

Any moving thing which is alive, etc. We need to understand why meat had not been permitted as food to Adam whereas now G'd permitted Noah to enjoy a meat diet. There may have been three reasons why Noah was permitted to eat meat. 1) His care for the animals during a whole year in the ark kept the whole species alive. 2) He expended a great deal of tender care on these animals. It is with regard to this that the Psalmist 128,2 says: יגיע כפך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך. "When you eat what you have laboured for with your hands, you will be happy and well off." 3) G'd was in a favourable frame of mind having promised not to destroy all flesh. Hence He permitted Noah to eat of the fruit of his labours.

9:4 But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.

RAMBAN

ONLY FLESH WITH THE LIFE THEREOF, THE BLOOD THEREOF, SHALL YE NOT EAT. Rashi wrote: "This prohibition applies while the animal's life is still in the blood. Thus, you should not eat flesh as long as there is life in it, meaning a limb cut from a living animal, nor shall you eat its blood together with its life, meaning the blood of a living animal." But if this be so Scripture should have said, "flesh, so long as there is life in it, and also its blood ye shall not eat." But according to the simple meaning of Scripture, this interpretation is incorrect, and according to the Midrash it is not true, for the sons of Noah have been admonished against eating a limb cut from a living animal, as is the opinion of the Sages, but not the blood of a living animal, as is the opinion of Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel. Rather, the interpretation of the verse is as follows: "only flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat," for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof.

9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

RAMBAN

AND SURELY YOUR BLOOD 'LENAPHSHOTHEICHEM' (OF YOUR LIVES) WILL I REQUIRE. This is as if it were written, your blood 'naphshotheichem,' [without the letter lamed], and meaning "your blood which is your lives." This is similar to the verse, 'Lechol' (To all) the instruments of the tabernacle, [which means all the instruments needed for the tabernacle, the letter lamed in the word lechol being redundant]. So also, the third 'l'Avshalom' (to Absalom), [which means, "the third, Absolom," the lamed in the word l'Avshalom is redundant]. It is

possible to explain your blood 'lenaphshotheichem' as meaning benaphshotheichem (in your souls), for the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof. Likewise, And ye shall eat no manner of blood in all your dwelling places, 'la'oph velabeheimah' (to fowl and to cattle), which is to be explained as "in fowl or in beast." The correct interpretation is that Scripture is saying, "the blood which is the life in you I will require." He is thus declaring that the blood is one with the life, and He intimates that one incurs the death penalty for spilling the blood upon which life depends, but not for spilling the blood of those limbs on which life is not dependent. Our Rabbis have expounded this verse as an injunction against suicide, the verse stating, "I will require your blood from your own souls."

AT THE HAND OF EVERY BEAST WILL I REQUIRE IT. I wonder: if "the requiring" is here meant in its usual sense, i.e., from the hand of the beast as well as from the hand of man, in both cases there will be punishment in the matter, but the beast has no reason [with which to discern between good and evil] so that it should be punished or rewarded! Perhaps this principle applies only to spilling man's blood; every beast that will devour him will itself be devoured, for such is the decree of the King. And this is the reason [why Scripture says of an ox that killed a human being], the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten. This is not a form of monetary punishment for the owner since even an ownerless ox is subject to the death penalty, and the command applies alike to the sons of Noah and to the Israelites. The meaning of Who so sheddeth man's blood would thus be, "all shedders" whether beast or man, their blood will be required by the Court on earth and by the hand of Heaven. It is possible that the meaning of the expression, at the hand of every beast, is that the vengeance upon the shedder of blood will be at the hand of every beast, just as it is said, That she hath received of the Eternal's hand double of all her sins. Thus He says, "Surely your blood will I require and avenge at the hand of every beast for I will send against the murderer all beasts of the earth, and I will also send against him the hand of man, and he will not escape them." Similarly, Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach, meaning "because of the hand of all mine adversaries;" This is the portion of a wicked man from G-d, and the heritage appointed unto him by G-d, [meaning this is the portion of a wicked man by the hand of G-d]. Perhaps the requiring at the hand of the beast means that she should not devour man for so He established their nature. The secret of the matter is that at the time of creation He gave man every herb bearing seed... and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree... for food, and to the beast He gave every green herb for food, and Scripture says, and it was so, meaning that such was their nature and habit. But now when He said of man that he may slaughter the lower living creatures for food and it was so placed in nature or habit that living creatures should eat each other, it became necessary to command that the other living creatures be unto men a prey to their teeth while they are to fear men and not devour them. And He said, And surely, your blood of your lives will I require, in order to hint that He will not require the blood of one beast from the hand of another. This being so, it was thus left to them to devour one another. And this is the reason why He mentioned here the prohibition of spilling the blood of man; it is on account of the permission given here for slaughtering, which became the customary way of spilling blood since in the opinion of our Rabbis, Adam had already been admonished against spilling blood. But on account of the permission for slaughtering, it became neces-

sary for Him to say, "I have permitted you to spill the blood of every living thing except your own blood. This is forbidden to you as well as to all living things for it will not be their nature to spill it."

9:7 And as for you, be fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it.

RAMBAN

AND YOU, BE YE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY. The plain meaning thereof is as its Midrash, i.e., that it is a commandment. A similar verse mentioned with reference to Adam, also one with reference to the sons of Noah in conjunction with the statement that G-d blessed them, constitutes a blessing, just as it is said concerning the fish. Now because He spoke here of the other living things and said, that they may swarm in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth, He said here, And you — man — be ye fruitful and multiply. He continued saying, swarm in the earth, and multiply therein, in order to repeat the commandment for the purpose of emphasis, thus stating that they should be engaged in it with all power [since those who came forth from the ark were few]. Perhaps He commanded them concerning the settlement of the whole earth, as I have explained in Seder Bereshith. Now Rashi wrote, "According to the plain interpretation, the first time [this was said to man it was said] as a blessing; here it is a command. According to the Midrashic explanation, [this command is mentioned here after the prohibition of murder] in order to liken one who abstains from having children to one who sheds blood." Now the Rabbis have derived this Midrash only from the juxtaposition of the verses, but the verse itself was written as a commandment, and the first [time this was said to man it was] as a blessing. [This is contrary to Rashi who implies that the Midrashic explanation differs from the plain interpretation.] And so the Rabbis have said in Tractate Sanhedrin, "But the commandment to be fruitful which was declared to the sons of Noah — as it is written, And you, be ye fruitful and multiply,...."

OR HACHAIM

Be fruitful and multiply! It was necessary to repeat this because when the Torah permitted resumption of marital relations when Noah and his wife left the ark (8,16), He gave permission to multiply. In this instance G'd commanded man to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did the Torah have to repeat this formula both in 9,1 and here in 9,7? Presumably in 9,1 the Torah introduced this commandment as a desirable action on man's part, a מצוה, whereas here it is repeated as a חובה, an absolute duty. Not only is performance of this commandment subject to reward, non-performance is subject to punishment.

The letter ו at the beginning of the verse ואתם is a strong hint in that direction. G'd said to Noah that inasmuch as He had sworn never again to destroy all flesh, man too must perform something in recognition of G'd's oath, i.e. to be fruitful and to multiply. We can now understand the statement in Shabbat 41 that if someone takes hold of his member and ejaculates, this is tantamount to his bringing a deluge on the world. Our sages considered such action a breach of the mutual oath between G'd and man. When man deliberately destroys his semen he is in violation of that oath.

חמישי FIFTH ALIYAH

9:8 And God spoke to Noaḥ, and to his sons with him, saying,
RAMBAN

AND G-D SPOKE TO NOAH AND TO HIS SONS. The meaning thereof is that He spoke to the sons by means of their father for his sons were not prophets, and Ham did not reach the level of prophecy. Likewise, "And the Eternal spoke to Ahaz," [which means that G-d spoke to him through Isaiah]. And so also, And the Eternal spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, which according to the words of our Rabbis means He spoke to Moses so that he would in turn speak to Aaron. And so Scripture makes explicit at the end of the present chapter: And G-d spoke to Noah.

9:11 And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

OR HACHAIM

And I will keep My covenant with you. We need to understand why the Torah repeated the promise that all flesh would not be destroyed again and that there would not be another deluge. If, as Rava had said in Shavuot 36, the reason is to give this assurance the status of an oath, our sages used both this and the second half of the verse, ולא יהיה המים for that purpose. They ignored 8,21 in that context. I have explained all that in connection with 8,21.

Perhaps we need to understand this verse in light of what the Talmud says in Sotah 11. The Talmud there questions why the Torah used the singular when speaking of the Jewish nation in Exodus 1,10. Why did the Torah say להבה נתחכמה לו, "let us outsmart it," instead of להבה נתחכמה להם, "let us outsmart them." Rabbi Chamah says there that the pronoun לו refers to the saviour of the Jewish people, i.e. to G'd. The Egyptians wanted to kill the Jewish babies by drowning because G'd had sworn not to bring another deluge. The Egyptians were aware that G'd makes the punishment fit the crime and that therefore G'd's retribution would have to be by water. They were confident they could escape G'd's wrath because He had sworn not to bring on another deluge. They did not realise that G'd had only promised not to flood the whole earth at one time; G'd remained free to flood parts of the earth at any time. Besides, G'd's promise extended to the waters not "descending" upon man; if man decided to walk into the waters, as did the Egyptians in Exodus 14,27, this was not part of the oath at all. Thus far the Talmud in Sotah. According to the first statement in the verse לא יכרת כל בשר עוד ממי המבול, G'd undertook not to bring on a flood which would engulf everybody; He was free to kill part of mankind by means of a flood; according to the second half of the verse G'd undertook not to destroy the earth itself even if He were forced to bring on a partial flood. The second half of the verse is a promise to earth, not to man. It would not have sufficed to write merely: "there will not be another deluge." This is why the Torah adds: "all flesh will not again be cut off by the waters of a deluge." According to this explanation the repeated "לא" mentioned in our verse, which, according to Rava in Shavuot constitutes an oath, are the words לא יכרת and לא יהיה; it does not mat-

ter that the two "לא" are followed by different verbs (יכרת or יהיה), as long as the oath applies to the same facts, i.e. no total deluge.

[At this point the author engages in a lengthy dialectic about the statements in the Talmud concerning this and other matters where an all-inclusive statement is followed by a more restrictive one. As the matter is of interest to advanced students of the Talmud only, I have omitted it. Ed.]

Summing up the discussion of the Talmud the lesson is this. We must not worry as much about the exact parameters of G'd's oath, and whether destruction of earth by fire is included in the oath or not. What matters is that G'd reassured His creatures that the effort to procreate was not futile. Never again would a species or its habitat the earth, be subject to total annihilation. If G'd's oath would refer only to using water as the agent to destroy earth or mankind, the whole oath would not be worth very much. This is one reason why the Talmud quotes Bileam as convincing Pharaoh that G'd's oath also included destruction of mankind or earth by fire.

The exact wording of G'd's oath concerned Abraham very deeply when he prayed about the possible salvation of Sodom.

9:12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

RAMBAN

THIS IS THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT WHICH I MAKE. It would appear from this sign that the rainbow in the cloud was not part of creation and that now G-d created a new thing by making a rainbow in the heavens on a cloudy day. Now commentators have said concerning the meaning of this sign that He has not made the rainbow with its feet bent upward because it might have appeared that arrows were being shot from heaven, as in the verse, And He sent out his arrows and scattered them on the earth. Instead He made it the opposite of this — [with the feet bent downward] — in order to show that they are not shooting at the earth from the heavens. It is indeed the way of warriors to invert the instruments of war which they hold in their hands when calling for peace from their opponents. Moreover, [with the feet of the bow being turned downward towards the earth, it can be seen] that the bow has no rope upon which to bend the arrows. We must perforce believe the words of the Greek [philosophers who maintain] that the rainbow is a natural result of the heat of the sun falling upon damp air for even in a vessel containing water which stands in the sun there is the appearance of the rainbow. When contemplating the language of Scripture we will understand that it is so, for He said, I have set My bow in the cloud, [the use of the past tense indicating that He had already set it so from the beginning and it is not a new creation]. He did not say, "I set in the cloud," even as He said, This is the sign of the covenant which I make. Moreover, the word kashti (My bow) — [in the possessive form] — indicates that He possessed the bow previously. Therefore, we shall explain the verse thus: "The rainbow which I have set in the clouds from the day of creation will be from this day on a sign of covenant between Me and you; whenever I will see it I will remember that there is a covenant of peace between Me and you." And should you want to know how the rainbow can be a sign, the answer is that it has the same meaning as the verse, This stone-heap be witness, and this pillar be witness; likewise, For these seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may

FURTHER COMMENTARY • NOACH

be a witness unto me. Every visible object that is set before two parties to remind them of a matter that they have vowed between them is called a “sign,” and every agreement is called a “covenant.” Similarly, in the case of circumcision, He said, And it shall be a token of a covenant between Me and you, because of the agreement that all seed of Abraham be circumcised to serve Him with one consent. Moreover, when the above-mentioned rainbow is seen in its inverted form, [namely, with the feet of the bow turned downward], it is a reminder of peace, as we have written. Thus, whether the bow was a newly established phenomenon or one that always existed in nature, the significance thereof as a sign is the same. Our Rabbis however have a profound secret in this section. They have said in Bereshith Rabbah: “I have set ‘kashti’ (My bow) in the cloud. This means, ‘My likeness, that which resembles Me.’ But is that possible? It is possible only as the straw resembles the fruit. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth. Rabbi Yudan said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Shimon, ‘This is like one who had in his hand some heated flour which he wanted to cast upon his son, but [because of his compassion for him] he cast it upon his servant.’” There in Bereshith Rabbah it also says: “And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between G-d — this alludes to the attribute of Justice on high. And every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth — this alludes to the attribute of justice on earth. The heavenly attribute of justice is stern; the earthly one is sparing.” And you already know the saying of the Rabbis concerning one who gazes at the rainbow: “Whosoever takes no thought for the honor of his Maker would have been better off had he not come into the world.” And if you will be worthy to understand the words of the Rabbis, you will know that the explanation of the verses is as follows: My bow — [kashti shares a common root with the word kasheh (hard, stern)] — which is symbolic of the attribute of justice, set in the cloud, shall be at the time of judgment for a token of the covenant.

And it shall come to pass when I bring clouds over the earth — meaning that when G-d will not make His countenance shine upon the earth on account of the sins of its inhabitants— “My attribute of justice will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember the covenant in a remembrance of mercy, and I will have compassion on the little ones that are on the earth.” Thus, this token and the covenant are like the token of circumcision and the covenant thereof, and the language of the verses is very appropriate for the subject. And thus the Rabbis in the above Midrash have explained the expression between G-d as referring to the attribute of justice on high, which is *gevurah* (strength), and that which is upon the earth as being the attribute of justice on earth, which is a kindly attribute, conducting the world together with the attribute of mercy, for Scripture does not say “that which is in the earth,” [which would have alluded to “the earth above”], but only “that which is on the earth.” I have already hinted at the secret of the Rabbis concerning the name “earth.” But Rashi wrote, “Between G-d— between the attribute of justice on high and you.” But our Rabbis did not intend to imply this interpretation in their Midrash.

שישי SIXTH ALIYAH

9:18 And the sons of Noah, that went out of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Yefet: and Ham is the father of Kena'an.

RAMBAN

AND HAM IS THE FATHER OF CANAAN. Rashi explained, “Because this section goes on to deal with Noah’s family, relating that Ham sinned and through him Canaan was cursed, and since the generations of Ham have not yet been mentioned [to let us know that Canaan was his son], it was necessary to state here that Ham is the father of Canaan.” And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that Ham only saw the nakedness of his father and informed his brothers while Canaan did him the evil, the nature of which Scripture does not reveal, and this is the meaning of the verse, And he knew what his youngest son had done unto him, since Canaan was the youngest of Ham’s sons, as Scripture enumerates them, And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mitzraim, and Phut, and Canaan. [Ibn Ezra thus interprets “son” to mean “grandson.”] Now here Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra abandoned his method of explaining Scripture according to its plain meaning and began to declare statements contrary to the truth. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that Ham was the youngest of Noah’s sons as I have explained at the beginning of this portion of the Torah, and Canaan was Ham’s oldest son. And as for the verse which states, And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mitzraim, and Phut, and Canaan, [which indicates that Canaan was the youngest son], this was stated after he was sold to be a servant of servants; Scripture gave his brothers preference over him. Now when this event happened to Noah, Ham had no other children except Canaan. This explains the verse, And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw, for Ham had no other son then, and when he sinned unto his father, he cursed his seed. Now if Noah had said, “cursed be Ham, a servant of servants shall he be,” the punishment would have been only his since the seed already born to him is not part of him, and perhaps Ham would no longer beget children. In that case Noah would not have taken his vengeance of him for who knows what shall be after him. Therefore, he cursed the son he had. Even if he will later beget a hundred children, it is enough that the oldest son — and all his seed with him — were cursed. The sin committed was that Ham saw the nakedness of his father and did not act respectfully. He should have covered his nakedness and concealed his shame by not telling even his brothers, but he told the matter to his two brothers in the presence of many people in order to deride him [Noah]. This is the meaning of the word outside And so did Onkelos translate it as “in the market-place.” The meaning of the verse, And [Noah] knew what he had done unto him, is that he knew that Ham had disclosed his disgrace to many, and he was ashamed of the matter. Our Rabbis have mentioned an additional sin that Ham committed.

9:20 And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

RAMBAN

‘ISH’ (A MAN) OF THE GROUND. Rashi explained it as “the master [owner or lord] of the ground. This is similar to the expression, ‘ish’ (the man) of Naomi,” [which means the master of Naomi]. But this is not so. ‘Ish’ Naomi is an expression of the marital state, just as: ‘ish ve’ishto’ (a man and his wife). Others

have said that it means “the outstanding one of the earth, and its leader,” and they brought proof from similar verses: Gideon the son of Joash, ‘ish’ (a man) of Israel, [meaning a chief of Israel]; Both ye sons of ‘adam’ and ye son of ‘ish;’ Art thou not ‘ish’ (a man)? And who is like to thee in Israel? And there are many other similar verses according to their opinion. In my opinion, Gideon the son of Joash ‘ish’ of Israel, refers to his genealogy, i.e., that he was an Israelite. Art thou not a man? means that “there is no one like you in Israel.” Similarly, strengthen yourselves, and be men, means that they should not be weak like women. Both ye sons of ‘adam’ and ye sons of ‘ish,’ [means “both ye low-born and] ye men of higher station.” However, a man of the ground is like the men of the city, since Noah lived all over the earth and never built a city or country to which he should relate himself. Similarly, a man of the field means one who constantly stayed there. In the Mishnah we find: “Yosei ben Yoezer a man of Tzreidah, and Yosei ben Yochanan a man of Jerusalem.” [It may be that a man of the ground means] that he was determined to work the ground, to sow and to plant, because he found the earth had been laid waste, for whoever dedicates himself to a certain purpose is so called, [i.e., ish of that purpose]. The men of the city means those that dwell in it. The men of David are his servants, and a man of G-d is one who is dedicated to His service. And so the Rabbis have said in Bereshith Rabbah: “A man of the ground [is so called just] as the castle guard is called by the name of the castle.” And the Rabbis also said that Noah had a passion for agriculture. Thus [the word ish is here used to signify] a relationship. The meaning of the word vayachel (and he began) is that he commenced the planting of vineyards. The preceding men had planted single vines, but Noah began to plant many rows of vines, which together comprise a vineyard. On account of his desire for wine, he did not plant the vine singly as other trees; rather, he made a vineyard.

9:26 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Kena ‘an shall be his servant.

RAMBAN

BLESSED BE THE ETERNAL G-D OF SHEMA, AND MAY CANAAN BE SERVANT TO THEM. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained that to them means that Canaan be servant to G-d and to Shem since Shem will compel him to worship G-d. And the second time [this expression is repeated — in Verse 27: May G-d enlarge Japheth, and may He dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be servant to them — Ibn Ezra] explained that Canaan would be a servant to Japheth and Shem. But if this be so, Noah came to curse his enemies, and behold he blessed Canaan that he be a servant to G-d! But Rashi wrote: “Blessed be the Eternal G-d of Shem, Who will in days to come carry out His promise to the descendants of Shem to give them the land of Canaan, and may Canaan pay them tribute. This is repeated again [in Verse 27, as explained above], in order to state that even when the children of Shem will be in exile, the children of Canaan will be sold to them as slaves.” [Thus Rashi interprets to them as referring to the descendants of Shem.] The correct interpretation appears to me to be that at first he [Noah] cursed him that he be a servant of servants to the entire world, and whosoever will find him will enslave him, for the meaning of unto his brethren is “unto all men,” just as in the verse, For I will set all men every one against his neighbor, and as is the sense of the expression, Every man his fellow. It may that unto

his brethren refers to Shem and Japheth for his father’s brothers are called “his brothers,” just as in the expression, that his brother was taken captive, [which refers to Lot who was a son of Abraham’s brother]. And some say — as found in Ibn Ezra — that unto his brethren means his father’s children [namely, Cush, Mitzraim and Phut, who are his father’s children]. Thus, after being made a servant to his father’s children and to Shem and Japheth, he was a servant to the whole world. Now Noah first blessed the G-d of Shem, thereby letting it be known that Shem will be a servant of G-d while Canaan will be subject to him. And to them alludes to the seed of Shem who were many. It is possible that to them reverts also to his brothers already mentioned. Then he blessed Japheth with an enlargement of the boundary, he blessed Shem with the dwelling of G-d in his tents, and finally said that Canaan be a servant to them, meaning to the two of them. He made Canaan subservient to Shem twice, [in Verses 26 and 27, as explained above], thus hinting that the seed of Shem will inherit his land and all that he has, for that which a slave acquires belongs to his master. This section was written in Scripture in order to make known that it was on account of his sin that Canaan became a servant forever and that Abraham was favored with his land. The subject of the wine’s effect on Noah was written because it contains a greater warning against drunkenness than that of the section on the Nazirite: even the perfectly righteous man — whose righteousness saved the whole world — even he sinned on account of wine, and it brought him to disgrace and the cursing of his seed.

10:1 Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Yefet; and to them were sons born after the flood.

RAMBAN

AND UNTO THEM WERE SONS BORN AFTER THE FLOOD.

The intent thereof is to imply that even though they were fit to have children before the flood — for in those generations it was normal to beget children at about sixty years of age — these did not beget children even at the age of a hundred, only until after the flood, for G-d restrained them from having children in order that they should not perish in the flood or that it [not] be necessary to save many persons in the ark. And so also did G-d do to this entire family: Lamech was delayed in begetting Noah until more than twice the age of his ancestors, and Noah much more. This is already mentioned in the commentary of Rashi who quotes from Bereshith Rabbah.

10:2 The sons of Yefet; Gomer, and Magog, and Maday, and Yavan, and Tuval, and Meshekh, and Tiras.

RAMBAN

THE SONS OF JAPHETH: GOMER. Scripture begins with Japheth for he was the oldest. After him, it mentions Ham [even though he was the youngest] for Scripture wanted to delay the account of the generations of Shem in order to place side by side the two sections dealing with Shem’s children since it is important to dwell at length on the generations of Abraham.

10:5 By these were the isles of the nations divided in their lands; everyone after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

RAMBAN

FROM THERE WERE PARTED THE INHABITANTS OF THE MARITIME SETTLEMENT OF THE NATIONS IN THEIR LANDS. The meaning of this is that the children of Japheth are those who dwell on the isles of the sea, and they are separated, each one of his sons residing singly on another isle, and their countries are far from each other. This was indeed the blessing of their father Noah, who said, May G-d enlarge Japheth, meaning that they be numerous in the expanses of the earth. The sons of Ham, however, are all near one another as they dwell on the continents. Therefore Scripture said, And the boundary of the Canaanite was from Sidon...in their lands and in their nations. The same is true of the sons of Shem. Now Scripture narrates all this in order to inform us of Abraham's lineage from Shem, and Ham's descendants are mentioned to inform us of those nations whose lands Abraham was favored with on account of the sin of their fathers. Therefore it tells also of Japheth and of the dispersion in order to inform us of the cause of the difference in languages and the scattering of the nations to the ends of the earth in a short period of time after the first man. Moreover, this narration serves to let us know the kindness of G-d and His keeping the covenant He made with Noah that he would not destroy them. The Rabbi said in Moreh Nebuchim that the genealogy of the nations verifies to those that hear it the principle of the creation of the world. This also is true, for our father Abraham will command his children and his household after him and will affirm to them the narration concerning Noah and his sons who saw the flood and were in the ark. Thus he, [Abraham, not having seen the flood but hearing of it], was witness from mouth to mouth in the whole matter of the flood, and he was a fourth witness to creation since Noah saw his father Lamech who saw Adam. Isaac and Jacob saw Shem, the witness of the flood, and Jacob told all this to those that went down to Egypt, as well as to Pharaoh and the people of his generation. The people in every generation similarly know from their fathers who tell them the deeds and progeny of the four to five previous generations.

10:7 And the sons of Kush; Seva, and Havila, and Savta, and Ra'ma, and Savtekha, and the sons of Ra'ma; Sheva, and Dedan.

RAMBAN

AND THE SONS OF CUSH: SEBA AND HAVILAH, ETC. These sons became the heads of nations, and the two sons of Raamah [namely, Sheba and Dedan] became two nations. Nimrod the son of Cush, however, did not become the head of a nation. Therefore, Scripture wrote afterward, And Cush begot Nimrod, and did not say, "and the sons of Cush: Nimrod, and Seba, and Havilah" [which would have indicated that Nimrod, like Seba and Havilah, also became the head of a nation]. But Phut the son of Ham became only one people, and not various nations as was the case with Mitzraim and Canaan, the sons of Ham. Therefore, Scripture did not return [to tell of the progeny of Phut, as it did with the other sons of Ham, namely, Cush, Mitzraim and Canaan]. In Bereshith Rabbah we find: "Said Resh Lakish, 'We might have thought that the family of Phut was swallowed up, but Ezekiel came and explained, Phut, and Lud, and all the Arabians,'" The meaning of the Midrash is that be-

cause Scripture did not return to tell about Phut, we might have thought that his seed intermingled with the children of Canaan and they neither became a nation, nor did they inherit a land called by their name. [The prophet Ezekiel thus clarified that the children of Phut existed as a separate nation in their own land.] However, in the case of Magog, and Madai...and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras, — the children of Japheth — Scripture also did not mention the families of their progeny: And so also with the sons of Shem: Elam, and Asshur, and Arpachshad, and Lud, who became heads of nations; Scripture did not mention their progeny since each one just became one people inhabiting one country, and they did not give rise to various nationalities.

10:8 And Kush begot Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

RAMBAN

HE BEGAN TO BE A MIGHTY ONE IN THE EARTH. Rashi wrote, "Mighty in causing the entire world to rebel against the Holy One, blessed by He, by the plan he devised for the generation that witnessed the dispersion of the races." But if so, he began means that he began after the flood [for it could not mean that he was the first ever to begin to rebel against G-d] since in the days of the generation of Enosh, such rebellion had already begun. It is possible that we should say that rebellion against G-d began in the generation of the dispersion while in the days of Enosh, people were not yet among those that rebel against the light; rather, they also worshipped other gods.

10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.

RAMBAN

HE WAS A MIGHTY HUNTER BEFORE THE ETERNAL. He ensnared the minds of people by his words, misleading them to rebel against the Omnipresent. Therefore it is said regarding any man who brazenly acts wickedly, knowing his Master and yet intentionally rebelling against Him — it is said, "This man is like Nimrod." Thus the language of Rashi, and so is the opinion of our Rabbis. But Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained the matter in the opposite way, by way of the plain meaning of Scripture, for he interpreted the verses thus: He began to be a mighty one over the animals in hunting them. Before the Eternal, Ibn Ezra explained, means that he would build altars and offer the animals as whole-offerings before G-d. But Ibn Ezra's words do not appear to be correct, and lo he justifieth the wicked, for our Rabbis knew by tradition of Nimrod's wickedness. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that Nimrod began to be a ruler by force over people, and he was the first monarch. Until his era there were no wars and no reigning monarchs; it was he who first prevailed over the people of Babylon until they crowned him. After that he went to Assyria, and he did according to his will, and magnified himself, and there he built fortified cities with his power and with his might. This is what Scripture intended when it said, And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...and Accad...and Shinar.

10:11 Out of that land went forth Ashshur, and built Nineve, and the city Rehovot, and Kelaḥ.

RAMBAN

OUT OF THAT LAND — when Nimrod reigned over it — WENT FORTH ASSHUR, meaning he went forth to Asshur for Asshur was one of the sons of Shem. This usage is similar to that found in the verses: And it shall go forth Hazar-addar, and pass along to Azmon, [which means that it shall go forth to Hazzar-addar]; And Og the king of Bashan came out against us Edrei, [which means at Edrei]; And he shall return his own land with great substance, [which means that he shall return to his own land]; and many other similar verses. This is why the land of Assyria is called the land of Nimrod, just as it is said, And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the keen-edge sword, alluding to Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah. Scripture tells yet more about Nimrod's prowess — i.e., that he was a mighty hunter, prevailing also over the animals and ensnaring them. Scripture said, Before the Eternal, to suggest wonderment for there was no one under the heaven like him in strength. Similarly, And the earth was corrupt before G-d, means that everything before Him on the earth was corrupt. This is like the verse, That soul shall be cut off from before Me, since every place is "before Him."

10:13 And Mizrayim begot Ludim, and 'Ananim, and Lehavim and Naftuhim.

RAMBAN

AND MITZRAIM BEGOT. Scripture mentions the descendants of Mitzraim but does not specify their habitation as it does concerning the others. With the sons of Japheth it mentioned the isles, with the sons of Cush it mentioned the land of Shinar and Asshur, and with the sons of Canaan it mentioned the boundaries of their land, and likewise with the sons of Shem. This was because Mitzraim (Egypt), the land of his habitation, was known for it was called by his name, and all his children lived around Egypt, and the names of their countries were also like their names. Thus we find for Pathrusim, [one of the children of Mitzraim], the land of Pathrus, which is part of the land of Egypt, as it says, And I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. And I will make Pathros desolate; Into the land of their origin. Similarly, Lud and all the Arabians were also around Egypt, and the names of their countries were like their names. So also the land of the Philistines was called Philistia, and so it is written [in Exodus 15:14], the inhabitants of Philistia. But Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that these [names — Ludim, and Ananim, etc., in Verses 13-14] — are names of countries, and in each and every country there dwelled one family. This is why the names are all in the plural form, [that is, on account of the persons in the family, hence Ludim and not "Lud"]. And the real proof [that these are names of countries is the expression], 'misham' (whence) went forth, for this word misham alludes to a place. In the opinion of the commentators, the meaning of the expression, that went forth, is that they begot them, just as in the expression, And kings shall come out of thy loins. Now Rashi wrote: "They [the Philistines] were descended from both of them [the Pathrusim and the Casluhim], for the Pathrusim and Casluhim used to live together in promiscuous intercourse, and the Philistines were their offspring. Thus in Bereshith Rabbah." In my opinion, by way of the plain meaning of Scripture, the Casluhim dwelled in a city of that name — which was part of

the land of Caphtor where the Caphtorim their brethren were — and they went forth from there, meaning from the Caphtorim who were of the seed of Casluhim. And they went in order to look for a resting-place for themselves, and they left the land to their brethren and conquered for themselves a land by the name of Philistia, after which they came to be called Philistines. This is why Scripture says, The Caphtorim, that came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead, the Caphtorim being of the sons of Casluhim, dwellers of the land of Caphtor.

10:15 And Kena'an begot Zidon his firstborn, and Het,

RAMBAN

AND CANAAN BEGOT ZIDON HIS FIRST-BORN. These were the ten nations, sons of Canaan, whose lands were given to our father Abraham since all seed of Canaan were sold into servitude forever. These were the ones that were given to Abraham. Their names, however, changed for the most part in the days of Abraham; here they were inscribed according to the names their father called them on the days of their birth, but after they parted according to their lands and their nations, they were called by other names. Perhaps they were called by the names of the land in which they settled, as we have explained. Likewise, Se'ir the Horite was so called because the name of the city was Se'ira. And there are many similar names. It may be that the Arkite and the Sinite did beget families but were cut off from them, and their children were, for example, the Kenite, and the Kenizzite. These became the heads of families, the entire nation being called by their name as was customary among the tribes of Israel. Now in His gift [of the land of Abraham, G-d] called the ten nations by the names by which they were known in the time of Abraham. Proof of this, [namely, that some of the names of the sons of Canaan changed in the time of Abraham], is that the Hivite mentioned here is not mentioned in the gift to Abraham, and yet he was among them, as it is said, And He shall cast out many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations. So also in every place [Scripture counts the Hivite among the nations that inhabited the land of Canaan]. Now the Canaanite is counted in the gift to Abraham among his [Canaan's] children, but only ten are counted [there — while eleven children of Canaan are mentioned here] — because one of his sons did not prevail like his other brothers, and so he was called together with his brother [the Hivite] by the name of his father, [thus bringing to a total of ten the number of nations whose lands were given to Abraham]. It is possible also that it was Zidon, Canaan's first-born who was called the Canaanite together with his brother, [the eleventh son of Canaan], who did not become a nation, [thus making ten the total number of lands given to Abraham]. Do not find it difficult that the land of the Philistines was also given to Abraham — as it is written, Sojourn in this land ... for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands — and yet the Philistines were of the sons of Mitzraim [and not of Canaan]! Scripture said, Counted to the Canaanites were the five lords of the Philistines, because the Philistines conquered part of the land of the Canaanites and settled thereon. And here in Scripture you will see [that the Philistines captured part of the Canaanite land], for the boundary of the Canaanite was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza yet we find that these were Philistine cities, since Abimelech, king of the Philistines, was king of Gerar, and Gaza

FURTHER COMMENTARY · NOACH

belonged to the Gazites. Similarly, For Gaza one. Sidon also belonged to the Philistines, for it is written, All the Zidonians will I drive out from before the children of Israel; only allot thou it unto Israel for an inheritance; and again, And also what are ye to Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Perhaps the rest of the land of the Philistines, excluding that of these five of their lords, was not given to Israel. Know that the land of Canaan with its boundaries, since it became a nation, was qualified for Israel, and this was the lot of their inheritance, as it is said, When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. But at the time of the dispersion of the nations, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave it to Canaan, on account of his being a servant, to keep it for Israel. This is just as a man who deposits for safe-keeping the belongings of the master's son with his servant until such time as the son will grow up and acquire the belongings as well as the servant. I will explain this yet with the help of G-d, exalted be He.

10:21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of 'Ever, the brother of Yefet the elder, to him were children born.

RAMBAN

AND UNTO SHEM, TO HIM ALSO WERE CHILDREN BORN. Since Scripture delayed the narration of the generations of Shem and related the generations of his younger brother as if Shem had no children, it therefore says here, to him also.

THE FATHER OF ALL THE CHILDREN OF 'EBER. This means that he was the father of all who dwelled beyond (eber) the Euphrates River, which was the place of Abraham's family. But it is not possible that Eber in this context be the name of the person who was the father of Peleg for why would Scripture connect the children of Eber with Shem [more so than with any of his other offspring]?

THE BROTHER OF JAPHETH THE ELDER. It is the way of Scripture to record a younger brother beside the oldest of his brothers, and not beside a younger one than himself. And similarly, we find the verse, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron. The reason for mentioning this altogether is to state that he [Shem] is the brother of the honorable Japheth, comparable to him in distinction. Scripture thus declares that the reason it delayed telling of his genealogy is not because Ham was more distinguished than he. It appears to me that "the elder" is descriptive of Shem, meaning that he was the older brother of Japheth, as Ham was the youngest of all, even though Scripture mentioned Japheth first. So, likewise, in all places in Scripture, the descriptive noun refers to the subject spoken of, such as: Isaiah the son of Amoz the prophet, [the term "the prophet" refers to Isaiah, who is the subject of the narration]; Unto Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, [here, "Moses' father-in-law" refers back to Hobab]. But Rashi wrote: "The brother of Japheth. It does not state "the brother of Ham" because these two [Shem and Japheth] honored their father whereas Ham put him to shame." This interpretation also declares that the sense of the verse is that Shem is the brother of the righteous brother, and not the brother of the wicked brother even though he is counted after him.

שביעי SEVENTH ALIYAH

11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

OR HACHAIM

The whole earth had a single language. We must give some thought to the intent of the generation that built the Tower. What exactly did they mean to achieve by means of a city and a tower? If all they had in mind was to give expression to some aspect of heresy, how was that expressed by their building plans? If indeed their heresy was of a serious nature, their punishment, i.e. scattering them over the globe, seems an inadequate punishment. How would that punishment cure them of their heresy? The words *ועתה לא יבצר מהם כל אשר יזמו לעשות*, "Must not everything they are planning to do be withheld from them now?," are difficult. This line poses severe problems for a believer. Why did they say: "we will build a city for ourselves?" Who else was there to build a city for? Besides, did not G'd want mankind to construct a civilised universe? Surely He did not want a bunch of cave-dwellers?

If we accept the view of the sages that G'd intended one third of the earth to be under cultivation and civilisation, one third desert, and one third water, if you were to line up all the cities side by side even now several thousand years later, they would not cover one hundredth of a third of the available land mass! Most of the earth would remain desert, or at least uninhabited! It seems therefore that the roads linking one town or village to another are all considered as part of the "built up" areas that are to form approximately one third of the earth's surface. When the Torah reports that the people spoke one language and *דברים אחדים*, were of one mind about all important issues, the meaning is that they literally congregated together without spreading out at all. To prevent becoming scattered they built a single city. They built the tower as a landmark so that if anyone of them strayed too far from home he would be able to orient himself by seeing the tower from a distance. The "name" the Torah speaks of is the "name" of the tower, i.e. its visibility from afar, its significance. It was this very reluctance to comply with G'd's intention to populate various parts of the earth which annoyed G'd. Had they not been endowed with free choice, they never could have defied G'd's plan for an evenly populated earth in this manner. G'd therefore had to resort to some stratagem to frustrate their plan without interfering with their basic freedom of choice. G'd achieved this by confusing their uniform language. Henceforth people who had a language in common would tend to congregate together, and as a result of a common language they would choose to live together. This could only be accomplished through their migrating from what used to be a central location, or what we are fond of calling "the cradle of civilisation." G'd's whole purpose was to fill the earth with people. The sin of wanting to remain together in one location was almost as serious as outright heresy, being *מקצץ הנטיעות*. While it is true that there are numerous mystical angles to this episode, and our sages elaborate on many of them, none of these explanations represent the plain meaning of the text.

11:2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shin'ar; and they dwelt there.

RAMBAN

AS THEY JOURNEYED FROM THE EAST. Rashi comments: "They journeyed from where they were then dwelling, as it is written above, And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest toward Sephar, unto the mountain of the east. From there they journeyed to search out for themselves a place that would accommodate them all, but they found none except Shinar." But this is not correct for this is the account of the children of Shem only, concerning whom it was so said [that they dwelt at "the mountain of the east"], and why should Scripture attribute the dispersion to the descendants of Shem when the children of Japheth and of Ham were more numerous than they? Besides, their habitation in their countries was from Mesha to the mountain of the east, and the dispersion of the nations took place before they settled there, for the children of Japheth surely did not come from the isles of the sea to the land of Shin'ar; rather, it was during the dispersion that G-d scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth, and at that time they were settled in their lands, after their nations. And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained that the mountains of Ararat are in the east. [Thus the verse before us which states, as they journeyed from the east, means as they journeyed from the mountains of Ararat.] That which he said is correct for the mountains of Ararat are in the east near Assyria, as it is said, And they escaped into the land of Ararat. And when Noah came down from the mountain [upon which the ark had rested], he and his sons settled in those lands, and when they increased they journeyed from there to this valley called Shinar. According to our Rabbis, the men of the dispersion rebelled against their Creator. But those who pursue the plain meaning of Scripture say that their idea was only to be closely united, for Scripture declares their intention, lest we be scattered, and does not relate any other matter [motive] concerning them. But if it be as those commentators say, then the men of the dispersion were fools for how could one city and one tower suffice for all people of the world? Or perhaps they thought that they would not be fruitful and multiply, as it is written, and the seed of the wicked will be cut off. However, he who knows the meaning of the word "name" — as they said, and we will make for us a name — will understand their intent and will know the extent of their evil intention in constructing the tower. And then he will understand the whole subject, namely, that theirs was an evil thought, and the punishment that came over them — to be dispersed in their languages and countries — was meted out measure for measure for "they mutilated the shoots" [of faith by seeking to undermine the principle of the Unity]. Thus their sin was comparable to that of their father Adam. Perhaps on account of this the Sages expounded: "And the Eternal came down to see... which the children of men had built. Said Rabbi Berachyah, '[Whose children could they have been but the children of men?] Perhaps the children of donkeys or camels? Rather it means the children of the first man, etc.'" Contemplate further that in the entire subject of the flood, Scripture mentions Elokim (G-d), while in the entire matter of the dispersion it mentions the Tetragrammaton; the flood came on account of the corruption of the land, and the dispersion came because "they mutilated the shoots" of faith and therefore their punishment was meted out by His

Great Name. This explains the "coming down" and also the Divine measure meted out in Sodom. The student learned [in the mystic lore of the Cabala] will understand.

11:28 And Haran died before his father Teraḥ in the land of his nativity, in Ur-kasdim.

RAMBAN

AND HARAN DIED IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS FATHER TERAH IN THE LAND OF HIS BIRTH IN UR OF THE CHALDEES. In accordance with the words of our Rabbis, Rashi wrote, "Terah accused his son Abram before Nimrod of having broken his idols, and he cast him into a fiery furnace. Meanwhile Haran waited and said to himself, 'if Abram proves triumphant I will be on his side, and if Nimrod wins I shall be on his.' When Abram was saved, they said to Haran, 'On whose side are you?' He replied, 'I am on Abram's side.' They therefore cast him into the fiery furnace, and he was burnt to death. It is to this event that the name Ur Kasdim (fire of the Chaldees) alludes. Menachem ben Saruk, however, explained the word ur as meaning 'valley.' So also, Therefore glorify ye the Eternal 'ba'urim' (in the valleys), and also, 'me'urath' (the den of) the basilisk. Every hole or deep cleft may be called ur." This matter received by our Rabbis through tradition is the truth, and I will elucidate it. Our father Abraham was not born in the land of Chaldaea. His ancestors were descendants of Shem, and Chaldaea and the whole land of Shinar were countries inhabited by the sons of Ham, and Scripture states, And he told to Abram the 'Hebrew,' not Abram the Chaldean. And it is further written, Your fathers dwelt in days of old beyond the river, Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, the word mei'olam (of old) teaching that his origins were always from there. And again Scripture states, And I took your father Abraham from beyond the river. Proof of the matter is that we find Nahor [Abraham's brother] in Haran. Now if Terah's place were in Ur of the Chaldees in the land of Shinar and Scripture relates that upon Terah's going forth from Ur of the Chaldees he took with him only his son Abram, his grandson Lot the son of Haran, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, then Nahor was left in the land of Chaldaea, [and yet we find that he was in Haran, which is in the land of Mesopotamia, as explained further]. But the truth of the matter is that the country of the birth of Abraham's ancestors was the land of Aram, which is beyond the River Euphrates; this was always the habitat of his ancestors. Thus Scripture says concerning the children of Shem, And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest toward Sephar, unto the mountain of the east, this being a generic name applicable to all their countries, as it is written there, in their land, after their nations, and again it is written, From Aram Balak bringeth me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the east, [proving that Aram is in the land of "the mountains of the east"]. Thus it is clear that Abram and his ancestors always lived in the land of Aram. Furthermore, we find in the Talmud that Abraham was imprisoned [by Nimrod because he broke the idols] in Cuthah, and that city is not in the land of Chaldaea, for it is written, And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath, and it is further written, And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal. But it would appear that Cuthah is a city beyond the river, in the land of Mesopotamia, for Haran is the name of a city in the land of Mesopotamia, as it is written, And he went to Aram-naharaim [Mesopotamia], unto the city of

Nahor, which is Haran. Furthermore, we have investigated and know it from the word of many students who lived in that country that Cuthah is a large city between Haran and Assyria, far from the country of Babylon. The distance between it and Haran is about that of a six-day journey. It is, however, included in the term, “beyond the river,” because it lies between Mesopotamia and the River Euphrates — which is the border of the land of Israel — and the Tigris which goeth towards the east of Assyria. Thus Terah begot his older sons, Abraham and Nahor, in the area “beyond the river,” the land of his ancestors. He then went with his son Abram to the land of Chaldaea, where his youngest son, Haran, was born. His son Nahor, however, remained “beyond the river,” in the city of Haran. It may be that he was born there or that he came to settle there from Cuthah. This is the meaning of [the verse here which says of Haran], in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees, since that was the birthplace of Haran alone [among Terah’s children]. This matter received through tradition [that Cuthah was the birthplace of Abraham] is also found in a book called *The Antiquities of the Nations*, as the Rabbi wrote in the *Moreh Nebuchim* that in the book of *Egyptian Agriculture* it is mentioned that Abraham, who was born in Cuthah, differed with the opinion of the people who worshipped the sun, and the king put him in prison, but he continued to argue against them for many days. At last the king was afraid that he might corrupt his land and turn the people away from their religion, and so he expelled him to the far land of Canaan, after confiscating all his wealth. Thus in any case it was in this place, the land of Chaldaea, that a miracle — or more exactly a hidden miracle — was done to our father Abraham, for G-d put it into the heart of that king to save him and not to kill him, and so he released him from prison to go where he desires. It may be that it was an overt miracle, i.e., that the king threw him into a fiery furnace, and he was saved, as our Rabbis have stated. Let not Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra mislead you with his questions, saying that Scripture has not narrated this wonder, for I will yet give you a reason for the omission and proof of the verity of this and other miracles like it. These peoples, however, did not mention it in their books because they differed with his [the Patriarch’s] opinion, and they thought his miracle was a deed of sorcery, just as was the case with our teacher Moses in his confrontation with the Egyptians at the beginning of his deeds. It is on account of this that Scripture no longer mentions this miracle [of Abraham] for it would have had to mention the words of those who differed with him, as it mentioned the words of the Egyptian magicians, and Abraham’s words were not as openly verified to them as were ultimately the words of our teacher Moses, [which were established by ten clearly revealed miracles]. Thus Scripture says, I am the Eternal that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it, for the word *hotzeisicha* (brought thee out) points to a miracle. It does not say, “that took thee from Ur of the Chaldees;” instead it says, that brought thee out, meaning that He brought out a prisoner from the dungeon just as in the verse: that brought thee out from the land of Egypt. And He said to Abraham, to give thee this land to inherit it, because from the time that G-d brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, it was His Will, exalted be He, to make him into a great nation and to give him this land of Canaan. From that day on which Abraham was saved, Terah — his father — and Abraham had in mind to go to the land of Canaan, a distant point far from the land of Chaldaea, out of fear of the king, since Haran, [the city of their inhabitation], was near them [the Chaldeans], and they were

one people with one language since Aramaic was their common language. They [Terah and Abraham] wanted to go to a nation where their speech would not be understood by that king and his people. This is the meaning of the verse, And they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran where their families and ancestors ever lived, and they settled among them, staying there for many days. It was there that Abraham was commanded to do what he had intended, i.e., to go to the land of Canaan, and so he left his father, who later died there in Haran, his country, and went with his wife and Lot, his brother’s son, to the land of Canaan. Thus Scripture says, And I took your father Abraham from beyond the river, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, for Abraham was commanded concerning this when he was yet “beyond the river,” and from there G-d took him and led him throughout all the land of Canaan. Now according to the opinion of our Rabbis [that Nimrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace, the name] Ur Kasdim will be understood as the plain meaning indicates, [namely, “Fires of the Chaldees”], from the same expression: I am warm, I have seen ‘ur’ (the fire). Scripture thus says, And they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, even though Terah did not go forth from the fiery furnace. However, since Abram is the main [person of interest, it mentions Ur Kasdim although the name has reference to him alone]. It may be that on account of the miracle the place came to be so called, just as we find, And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, and others. Scripture thus alludes that when Abram went forth from the fiery furnace, they all fled from that country. And the meaning of the verse, Glorify ye the Eternal ‘ba’urim,’ is in my opinion consonant with that which the Rabbis have said [concerning Ur Kasdim, namely, that it means “the Fire of the Chaldees”], for urim are the high mountains on which they make fires and “kindle the flares” to make the new events known quickly in distant places, even as it says [in the second half of the verse]: In the isles of the sea, the name of the Eternal, the G-d of Israel. The sense of that verse is thus that for the glory of G-d they should let the whole world know the miracle and the wonder which had been done to them. So also, ‘Me’urath’ the basilisk means his [the serpent’s] hole, where his fire and great heat are, just as he is indeed called saraph [the serpent, but literally, “the burning one”]. And I have seen in the Midrash: “Arise, ‘uri’ (shine). Therefore glorify ye the Eternal ‘ba’urim.’ How do you glorify Him? Rabbi Yeivo bar Kahana said, ‘With these torches such as the lanterns which burn in synagogues in all places, even in the isles of the sea, to the glory of G-d.’” Thus it is clear that the Rabbis understood the word *ba’urim* as an expression of fire, in accordance with its simple sense.

מפטיר MAFTIR

11:30 But Saray was barren; she had no child.

OR HACHAIM

Sarai remained barren, she had no child. Why did the Torah have to add “she had no child?” Our sages (*Yevamot* 64) comment that she had no womb. The Talmud there elaborates that both Abraham and Sarah were congenital טומטמאים, people with undeveloped genitals. The Talmud bases this on Isaiah 51,1: “Look to the rock you were hewn from, to the quarry you were dug from. Look back to Abraham your father and to Sarah

who brought you forth." Rashi comments there that "hewn from" and "dug from" refer to G'd having supplied male and female genitals to Abraham and Sarah (after they were adults). The Talmud also states there that when someone marries a woman and lives with her for ten years and she bears no children during that time, he should divorce her and pay her *כתובה*, her marriage settlement. This is based on Genesis 16,3 where Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to have children with after she had failed to bear children after ten years in the land of Israel. The Talmud questions why we do not rather take Isaac as an example. He lived with Rebecca for at least twenty years and did not take another wife but prayed and as a result had children from Rebecca. The Talmud answers that actually the reason the Torah mentions the number of years Abraham lived in the land of Israel before he married Hagar was to enable us to compute Ishmael's age in comparison to Isaac's. This also enables us to calculate Jacob's age during different periods of his life. Tossaphot comment that actually Isaac too waited only for ten years before he prayed, seeing that Rebecca was three years old when he married her and her normal child-bearing years did not commence until after Isaac was married to her for ten years. Tossaphot concludes that a) not all Midrashim agree on the subject; b) in those days girls were able to bear children at a much younger age than nowadays. They also say that even assuming that Abraham had been born without visible genitals, by the time he married he had obviously developed in this respect. However, we must accept the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah who holds that once a *טומטום*, such a person is unable to sire children even after his genitals have become visible. Of course, one must assume that Sarai's genitals too, had become visible by the time Abraham married her. [there is no good reason that Abraham a) would have married while suffering such a crucial physical blemish; b) that Sarah would have been given in marriage to anyone while she was similarly afflicted. Ed.] Even according to the view that once the genitals of a *טומטום* have become visible he is no longer totally sterile, it is unlikely that such people will be capable of siring or bearing children. The Torah therefore adds the words *אין לה ולד* in the case of Sarah to tell us that though she was no longer a *טומטום*, her condition had not changed materially, and she still did not conceive.

Furthermore, Rabbi Yehudah is of the opinion that the rule that a *טומטום* remains sterile even after his genitals become visible, applies only to the male. A female is quite likely to conceive once her genitals have been laid bare. According to this view our verse means that a) first Sarah was barren, i.e. her inability to conceive was not due to her genitals not being visible, a defect suffered by her husband but not by her. In her case it was simple barrenness that prevented her from giving birth. The Torah had to add the words *אין לה ולד*, to teach us that this was not due to a visible deformity.

According to the view that she did not have a womb, we must understand the verse as follows: It turned out she was barren due to an invisible deformity, i.e. the lack of a womb. This deformity only came to light after her genitals had become visible, i.e. after her visible deformity had been cured. The expression *ויהי* is not appropriate except for a new development, not for a condition which existed already, [many commentators do not share that view of the meaning of *ויהי*. Ed.] The words *אין לה ולד* therefore are meant to draw attention to her not having a womb to carry an embryo in.

11:31 And Teraḥ took Avram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Saray his daughter in law, his son Avram's wife; and they went out with them from Ur-kasdim, to go into the land of Kena'an; and they came to Haran, and dwelt there.

RAMBAN

AND THEY WENT FORTH WITH THEM FROM UR OF THE CHALDEES. Because Abram was more important than his father and those that followed his counsel and for whose sake they went, Scripture says, And they went forth, [rather than "he went forth"] even though it says at the beginning of the verse, And Teraḥ took. Lot and Sarai, however, went with them to the land of Canaan on account of Abram, for even after Abram separated from his father they went along with him.

OR HACHAIM

Terach took his son Abram, etc. We must understand this verse as an extension of a popular proverb quoted by Baba Metzia 75, that if someone experiences bad luck in one location and he does not move to another location he only has himself to blame if his bad luck continues. When Terach realised that his son Abram did not beget children in Ur Casdim he left in the direction of the land of Canaan to see if his luck would improve. The Torah shows us that Abraham was so important in the eyes of the other members of his father's household that they all joined in the migration in order to stay close to him. This is why the Torah adds the words *ויצאו אתם*, "they emigrated with them (Abraham and Sarah)."

11:32 And the days of Teraḥ were two hundred and five years: and Teraḥ died in Haran.

RAMBAN

AND TERAH DIED IN HARAN. After Abram had left [Haran, as related in the next chapter, and had come to the land of Canaan], Terach remained alive for many years after that. Why then does Scripture mention the death of Terach before the departure of Abram? [The answer is that Scripture does so] in order that this matter [of leaving his home during his father's lifetime] might not become publicized to all, lest people say that Abram did not show a son's respect to his father and mother as he left his father in his old age and went his way. That is why Scripture speaks of Terach as dead. Moreover, for the wicked, even while alive, are called dead. Thus the words of Rashi which are found in Bereshith Rabbah. But I wonder about their words for this is the customary way for Scripture to relate the life of a father, his begetting a son, and his death, and afterwards to begin the narration of the son in all generations. This is the usual manner of Scripture. Noah himself lived yet in the days of Abraham, and his son Shem lived throughout Abraham's life span. Now it is possible that the Rabbis came to conclusion of this Midrash because with respect to Terach, Scripture departed from the format of the entire chapter. Regarding Shem and his descendants, Scripture did not mention their death at all, nor did it total the sum of their years. But here with Terach it again follows the first order it used concerning the longevity of the people from Adam to Noah and totals up all the days of Terach and mentions his death. In addition, it mentions the place of death as having been in Haran, the same place it had mentioned concerning Abraham, [i.e., that he had gone there, in Verse 31]. That is why the Rabbis expounded that all this was to make it easily apparent that Abraham was there with Terach when he

died. Moreover, because Scripture had already begun the subject of Abraham and told how he had gone forth with his father from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan, the Rabbis found it difficult to understand why Scripture did not systematically arrange Terah's life and death, and write it chronologically. [That is why they made the aforementioned interpretation.] And as for that which the Rabbis also said in Bereshith Rabbah — "First you interpret that the wicked, even while alive, are called dead" — this too I find surprising, for the Sages have already deduced from the verse, "And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace. [His father was an idolater, and yet G-d informed Abraham that after death he would go to him! Clearly the verse teaches you] that He announced to Abraham that his father would have a portion in the World to Come." Perhaps the intent of the Rabbis was that Terah repented at the time of death, but he lived all his days in wickedness and therefore was called "dead." In the words of Rashi: "Scripture teaches you that Terah did repentance at the time of death." Perhaps it may be that our Sages, of blessed memory, say that Terah has a portion in the World to Come by virtue of his son. And that was the announcement, for Abraham did not know it until he was informed of it at the time G-d told him, And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace. And so I found in a Midrash: "All kinds of wood were valid for use in the altar fire save only the wood of the olive and the vine, for since oil and wine were offered upon the altar, the fruits save the trees. And so we find in the case of Abraham that he saved Terah, as it is said, And thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace." Lech Lecha

OR HACHAIM

Terach lived to be 205 years. The reason the description of Terach's age differs from the description of the other people listed in this chapter, i.e. "all the days of so and so were, etc." is twofold. It can either mean that Terach lived longer than the years originally allocated to him, or it can mean that he did not live all the years that had originally been allocated to him. Here the absence of the words "all the days of his life" most likely mean that he lived longer than the years originally allocated to him. He accumulated merit because of his extraordinary concern for the welfare of his son Abraham. One proof may be seen when we compare Terach's lifespan with that of his father Nachor.

The latter had only lived for a total of 148 years (11,24-25). Terach lived 57 years longer than his father. Our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 65,12) have said that when a man approaches to within 5 years (either side) of the age at which his parents died he should begin to be concerned about his own death approaching.

Inasmuch as Terach lived many years longer than his father, the Torah reports his death in conjunction with his migration to Charan to indicate which merit added the extra years to his life. Had the Torah merely stated the usual "ויהיו כל ימי תרח", all the years of Terach were, etc., we would have assumed that G'd had originally allocated to him a lifespan of 205 years although this would have been quite wrong. There is also support from the text for the view that Terach lived fewer years than had been allocated to him originally. The Torah reports that he set out on his way to Canaan. However, the Torah also reports that he died in Charan which is on the way. Terach had failed to make good on his vow to move to Canaan and settled in Charan. G'd shortened Terach's lifespan because he did not make good on his vow.

I have had an inspiration which enables me to explain why Abraham left his father in Charan though the latter had migrated for his sake all the way from Ur Casdim. When Abraham moved to Canaan Terach was 143 years old. He was 68 years old when Abraham was born and Abraham was 75 when he moved to the land of Canaan. [I presume that verse 26 which describes Terach as 70 years old when his three sons were born must refer to his age when the youngest was born. Ed.] It seems difficult to understand that Abraham abandoned his father for so many (62) years, even though G'd had told him לך לך.

I believe the answer is simply that Abraham had good reason to expect that his father would die soon after his departure for Canaan, seeing that he was within 5 years of the age at which his grandfather Nachor had died. G'd may even have given Abraham a subtle hint when He told him לך לך, go on "your account." The words "on your account," were to indicate that even if Abraham's father were to live additional years he had only Abraham's merit to thank for those years. Abraham therefore did not have to blame himself for "abandoning" his aged father.