

The Sukkah Escorts us into the Year

Introduction

The Baal Shem Tov stated that all of the Zemiros were composed with Ruach HaKodesh. One of the Zemiros we sing on Shabbos is "יונה מצאה בו מנוח ושם ינוחו יגעי כח", the dove found peace on Shabbos and all the weary ones will rest there. Which dove rested on Shabbos?¹

Noach dispatched the Dove to check if the waters of the Mabul had receded. During the Mabul, the Sun, Moon and stars ceased to function^x, the Mizrachi notes. How was the dove able to visually assess the situation? The Mizrachi does not reach a resolution.

Noach was commanded to supply the Teivah with a Tzohar for illumination.

Some Sages are of the opinion that the Tzohar was a window. However, during the Mabul the Sun, Moon and stars had ceased to function, so which light would the window allow into the Teivah?

Other Sages hold that the Tzohar was a precious gem. However, later, the verse explicitly states that Noach opened the window of the Teivah². If the Tzohar was a precious gem, and not a window, which window did Noach open?

The Tzohar would shine by day and darken at night and this is how Noach tracked the passage of time³. The existence of day and night is contingent upon the rising and setting of the Sun and Moon². According to which day/night did the Tzohar light up or dim by?

Furthermore, if there were no days and nights, and therefore no months and years, how can the verse state that "The Teivah rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month⁴?" There were no days and therefore no months!

In any case, what was the purpose of pausing the function of the luminaries? It rained for forty days and the springs gushed boiling water for one hundred fifty days, in order to cleanse the environment of the sinful pollution. But why did the luminaries have to be suspended?

We will first explain some concepts and thereby arrive at the resolution to these difficulties.

Gevurah – Harshness - was the Underlying Force of the Mabul

The Mabul was a very severe punishment. It emanated from the Divine attribute of Gevurah – Strict Judgment - which punishes wrongdoers. The Torah uses the word Gevurah many times when describing the Mabul. **וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם ... וְהַמַּיִם גְּבַרוּ מְאֹד מְאֹד עַל-הָאָרֶץ ... הַמַּשׁ** "וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם" - the waters increased [lit. strengthened] ... and the waters

¹ Some commentators note that the dove symbolizes the Jewish People, but that doesn't seem to be the intent of the author of this Zemiros.

² As the verse states in Parshas Bereshis chapter 1:14, **וְהָיוּ הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה**, "וְהָיוּ הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה" 'There shall be luminaries in the sky that will separate day from night, they will be for ... days and years'.

were very, very strengthened upon the Earth ... the waters increased [lit. strengthened] to fifteen cubits higher.' The waters of the Mabul were infused with the attribute of Gevurah.

Shabbos Dissolves all Harshness

In כגונא - an excerpt from the Zohar that many recite upon the onset of Shabbos - we say, "וכל דינין מתעברין מנה", all harshness is removed from before Shabbos. There is no Gevurah on Shabbos.

If a funeral procession encounters a bride on the way to her chuppah, the coffin and its entourage move aside to make way for the bride, and not the other way around.[†] The Shabbos is compared to a bride and all unpleasantness is removed from before her.

The Ari Hakadosh, in the last stanza of אזמר בשבחין - one of the Zemiros that we sing Friday night - describes this. "שביתין ושביקין מסאבין דרחיקין, חבילין דמעיקין וכל זיני חבושין" - the despised side of impurity and the punishing angels that cause pain, cease and depart.

Even the souls languishing in Gehinom have peace on Shabbos.

The Power of Shabbos Banished the Mabul

נו, true to his name, contained the qualities of Shabbos, the day of מנוחה, rest.[‡] The Teivah was also an abode of Shabbos - within the Teivah it was Shabbos seven days a week.

The flimsy cork boards of the Teivah were no match for the raging waters of the Mabul. The intense heat of the Mabul should have melted the tar that covered the boards. What prevented the powerful waves from destroying the Teivah?

Like the coffin that is removed from before the bride, the waters of Gevurah fled from the Teivah which was like the Shabbos bride.

The Sun, Moon and stars could not function during the Mabul because they cause and determine the passage of time. If there would be days, then when the Shabbos would come, it would put an end to the Mabul. Since the Mabul had to rage for forty continuous days - and then to a lesser degree, for one-hundred-and-fifty days - time had to be suspended by pausing the luminaries.

Opening the Window of Heaven for the Sun

On Shabbos, we recite additions to the blessings of Shema. We laud G-d who – 'Opens the Eastern gates, splits open the windows of Heaven, and takes out the Sun and the Moon, thereby illuminating the entire world.'

Man has conquered enough of space to know that there exist no windows or doors in Heaven through which the Sun is escorted daily. These words obviously have a deeper meaning.

The Ramchal[§] and the Chasam Sofer^{||} explain that the Sun discussed here refers to the spiritual counterpart of the Sun we know. It is this spiritual Sun that gives our physical Sun its power. There are spiritual windows and doors through which the energy of the spiritual Sun descends to the physical Sun.

From a spiritual perspective, time is much more than just the passage of moments. Time is the medium through which different auras are transmitted to the world. For example, when the seventh day arrives, the quality of peace and blessing descend. The atmosphere at night is very different than during the daytime.

It is the spiritual Sun and Moon that determine the aura for each country and the physical Sun and Moon that transmits it through time. When the Sun sets in Eretz Yisroel on Friday, we in America do not yet experience the tranquility of Shabbos, because it has not yet been transmitted to our country through the physical Moon^x.

The Function of the 'Tzohar' in the Teivah

Even though the functions of the celestial bodies had been suspended during the Mabul, day and night did not cease in the spiritual spheres.

The purpose of the Tzohar was to serve as the conduit through which the spiritual Sun and Moon would transmit the aura of each period of time. Through the Tzohar, day turned to night as usual in the Teivah.

This is why the Tzohar is referred to as a window by some of the sages. It served the same task as the spiritual windows in Heaven by allowing the various attributes of time to pass through. However, the Tzohar also shone like the Sun and the Moon, similar to a sparkling, precious gem.

The Tzohar had a dual task. The disagreement among the sages is only as to which of these was more significant, the gem aspect or the window function. However, all agree that the gem served as a window.

During the Mabul, the world had ceased to function. Time had stopped and the Sun and the Moon were inoperative. Each day, the Heavenly Sun and Moon broke through - not the windows of Heaven - but the window/Tzohar of the Teivah, and the gem/Tzohar shone like the Sun and the Moon.

We Serve Hashem from Two Perspectives

A Jew serves G-d in two ways; one is termed 'Shabbos' and one, 'Rosh Chodesh.'

We don't have any control on when Shabbos comes. As soon as Friday is gone, Shabbos sets in. Shabbos is a gift from Hashem.

Shabbos is also a day of rest. In addition to abstaining from physical work, we do not have to struggle to serve Hashem as much as during the week. Words of prayer flow more easily and Torah is more readily understood. We are generally on a loftier and more spiritual plane on Shabbos.

The term for serving Hashem in Shabbos mode is "איתערותא דלעילא", an awakening from above. Hashem arouses us to spiritual awareness.

Rosh Chodesh, on the other hand, is established by the Jewish Court which is situated on Earth. When they determine Rosh Chodesh, the angels in Heaven are able to celebrate. We initiate and control the coming of Rosh Chodesh.

Rosh Chodesh is also a weekday, when we engage in physical work. In Rosh Chodesh mode, we have to struggle to serve Hashem.

This is called 'איתערותא דלתתא', the awakening is from below. Through our actions below, we stimulate goodwill above.

As servants of Hashem, the mode of Rosh Chodesh is more important to us. We have to struggle to overcome our lethargy and study Torah, connect to Hashem through Tefilah, and fulfill mitzvos. We should not wait for inspiration to strike before attempting to scale spiritual heights.

Rosh Chodesh Mode is Actually Shabbos Mode

When we emerge victorious from a difficult struggle - for example, we had trouble concentrating on our prayers, and persisted stubbornly, thereby achieving our goal of passionate prayer, and attained closeness to Hashem - we are in great danger of falling into the trap of thinking that we are self-made.

We are not. Our ability to struggle in the first place and our consequent success was also a gift from Hashem. Many people wish they could struggle to pray properly and instead find themselves at the end of 'Aleinu' after a long daydream.

Even when we served Hashem from a perspective of Rosh Chodesh, we really served him with the power of Shabbos. In truth, everything is Heavenly inspired.³

The Deeper Meaning of the Disagreement of the Sages

Those Sages who are of the opinion that the Tzohar was a precious gem feel that we must serve Hashem through relentless struggle, thereby polishing ourselves into sparkling gems - that shine on their own - in the spirit of Rosh Chodesh.

The Sages that hold that the Tzohar refers to a window remind us that even our ability to struggle is being shined into us. We are merely a window through which Hashem shines the light through, in the spirit of Shabbos.

What Do We Commemorate with the Sukkah?

Rabbi Eliezer holds that the Sukkah commemorates the Clouds of Glory. Rabbi Akiva is of the opinion that the Sukkah is a remembrance for actual huts that the Jews built in the wilderness.³

We follow the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer - the Sukkah commemorates the Clouds of Glory. However, we usually rule according to the opinion of Rabbi Akiva. So why is the law according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer in this instance?

Besides, the opinion of Rabbi Akiva is difficult to understand. What is the big deal about huts in the desert? Every nomad erects one! Also the Torah commands us to sit in Sukkos because "I [Hashem] settled the Jewish People in Sukkos".¹ If the Jews erected their own huts, when did Hashem settle the Jewish People in huts?

The Baal HaRokeach zt"l explains that the Sukkos which Rabbi Akiva refers to are the huts which the Jewish soldiers erected when they went to battle against Sichon and Og. The Sukkah commemorates our miraculous defeat against these two mighty superpowers.

However, wouldn't weapons of war serve as a more effective tribute to a miracle in battle? The huts they used were a rather minor detail of their triumph.

Another thing is puzzling. Soldiers do not build huts on a battlefield, they dig trenches. A hut is an easy target.

The Sukkah Accompanies us Throughout the Year

Our last question will provide the answer for the first two.

³ The Sefas Emes thereby explains the verse 'Every Rosh Chodesh and every Shabbos, all flesh will come to bow before me, says Hashem' (ישעי' סו:כג), as follows: Even when we serve Hashem with effort, represented by bowing, in Rosh Chodesh mode, it is really Shabbos mode, a gift from Above.

The Clouds of Glory surrounded the Jewish nation throughout its sojourn through the wilderness. They protected the Jews from being harmed by predators. When the Jewish soldiers exited the Clouds of Glory to wage war against Sichon and Og they were not left defenseless because the Clouds of Glory accompanied them to battle. They were able to sit in wooden huts with complete serenity because the enemy's arrows were absorbed by the Clouds of Glory, just as they had absorbed the Egyptian missiles at the Splitting of the Sea.

The Sukkah commemorates the Clouds of Glory, but not because the law is determined according to Rabbi Eliezer. To the contrary, the law is decided according to Rabbi Akiva! Rabbi Akiva maintains that the Sukkah commemorates a much deeper aspect of the Clouds of Glory. He holds that the Sukkah represents the Clouds of Glory that accompany a Jew when he is *outside* of their protective cover!

We commemorate the war of Sichon and Og specifically with the flimsy huts they stayed in, because that shows the complete security that the Jews enjoyed even on the battlefield! They built dwellings without any defenses because they were secure in the faith that the Clouds of Glory, Hashem's protective wings, *accompanied* them.

The Sukkah - which commemorates the Clouds of Glory that accompanied the Jews *outside* of its confines - accompanies us outside the limitations of the holiday. The protection and holiness of the Sukkah is with us the entire year.⁴

The Light of Shabbos Accompanied the Dove out of the Teivah

The אור הגנוז, primordial light of creation, was holy and very intense. With it, a person could see from one end of the world to the other. Hashem deemed our imperfect world unfit for it and hid it until the Ultimate Redemption when the world will attain perfection.

Shabbos is מעין עולם הבא, a foreshadowing of the World to Come. On Shabbos, some of the אור הגנוז shines.

When Noach - the man of Shabbos - sent the dove outside of the Teivah - where it was always Shabbos - to search for dry land, he sent along with it the aura of Shabbos.

The verse doesn't state, וַיִּשְׁלַח, he sent; it says, וַיִּשְׁלַח, and he *accompanied*.⁵ Noach's essence - the Shabbos - escorted the dove on its mission. The protective atmosphere of Shabbos extended outside of the Teivah, just as the protection of the Sukkah escorts us through the year.

By the light of the אור הגנוז that shines on Shabbos, the dove was able to see even in the darkness of a world lacking the illumination of the Sun and Moon.⁶

When Noach opened the window of the Teivah to send the dove on its mission, he did more than simply allowing it an exit. He reenacted the windows in Heaven that allow the light of the spiritual Sun to shine through to the physical Sun. By opening the window, he directed the אור הגנוז further, outside of the Teivah.

⁴ This can be inferred from the verse, 'In Sukkos you shall dwell seven days, every citizen of Yisrael shall dwell in Sukkos' (ויקרא כג:מב) which can be interpreted as follows: If you will dwell in the Sukkah for seven days, then every Jew will be protected in the Sukkah a whole year, under the wings of Hashem.

⁵ When Pharaoh sent Avraham out of Egypt, וישלחו אותו, the Targum translates it as ואלויאו, they accompanied.

⁶ During the Plague of Darkness, the Jews were also able to see using this light.

Indeed, יונה מצאה בו מנוח. The dove found a מנוח, a spot of dry land where it could build its nest, by using the אור הגנוז of Shabbos when it went on its mission outside of the Teivah.

Not everyone can enjoy the light of Shabbos. The raven that Noach had originally attempted to send on this mission could not see with the light of the אור הגנוז because his spiritual senses had been dulled through coarse behavior. To enjoy Shabbos, one must labor the entire week in serving Hashem.

Renew Yourself

For the duration of the Mabul, the entirety of creation was confined to the area of the Teivah. Outside, the world had come to an end.

When Noach came out of the Teivah, he saw a new world. The old one had been destroyed and a new one had replaced it. That is why the day Noach exited the Teivah, "וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּשִׁבְעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ יִבְּשֶׁה הָאָרֶץ"^א, 'In the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the Earth dried up', is gematria (numerically equals to) "בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹקִים" 'In the beginning G-d created the Heaven and the Earth' (they both equal 2701). There was an entirely new creation.

The Parsha ends with the emergence of a new star on the horizon; Avraham Avinu is born. We warm our heart during the frigid winter by the light of our great forefather.

This week – when the world was renewed and the Jewish nation born - there is tremendous potential for self-renewal. A new year is beginning now; we can all make a new start.

**ונזכה אור חדש על ציון תאיר וכו'
May we merit the new light that will shine on Tzion**

^א רש"י ח:כב

^ב בראשית ח:ו

^ג בראשית רבה לא:יא

^ד בראשית ח:ד

^ה בראשית ז:יה-כ

^ו שמות ח"ב דף קל"ה ע"ב

^ז כתובות דף י"ז ע"א

^ח זוהר

^ט מאמר השמש

^י דרשת שמות שובבים תקנ"ד

^{יא} שע"ו הרב סימן א' מהדורא תנינא סעיף ח'

^{יב} סוכות דף יא ע"ב

^{יג} ויקרא כג:מג

^{יד} בראשית ח:יד