

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

How the World Broke Down

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI ADI ROLAND

This week the Torah recounts one of the sadder periods of world history, the total eradication of mankind and living beings and their restart. One of the fundamental questions that begs asking is how did the world as a whole reach such a debased and immoral existence that necessitated its complete eradication? Of the whole world at the time, only Noach and his family merited to be saved. How did the world fall to such a low level? If we look through what *Chazal* (the Sages) tell us of that generation, I think we can find a possible understanding.

The *Midrash*, quoted by Rashi in last week's *parasha*, describes the households of the generation of the *mabul* (flood): each household consisted of a husband and two wives. One wife's marriage was based purely on lust, considered only for her beauty, and sterilized to ensure that her looks would not be diminished through pregnancy and childbirth. This wife, *Chazal* say, used to be at her husband's side, wining and dining together and generally having a good time. The other wife was taken for no other reason than to have children. This wife, *Chazal* also say, would generally not live together with her husband as she was treated as an outcast, lacking the beauty of her co-wife and, therefore, her husband's attention. This was society as a whole in those generations. There was no such thing as holy matrimony, only a contract between two individuals that is totally devoid of any *kedusha*. If we think about this for a moment, try to imagine

a child growing up in such a house. He sees his birth-mother mostly ignored by his father, while his father gives nearly all his attention and time to his other beautiful wife. What does the child grow up learning? That only the pursuit of one's lusts and desires is important, while investing and building a family is an afterthought, an unwanted chore. This child takes his father's actions and attitudes to heart and prioritizes his desires above all else. This continues for generations upon generations, heaven forfend, until it reaches a point that their desires have grown beyond their forefathers'; no longer are they satisfied with just their wives, but they look to others' wives and even animals to fulfill their lusts. And this is done without any regard as to how their actions may affect other people or the world around them. The only thing that matters is the fulfillment of their desires and nothing else. This causes a complete societal breakdown, without any hope being able to restore it. A real travesty!

Only one man and his family were worthy of being saved. One man, whom the Torah describes as having only one wife, who, as a couple who suffered through nearly 500 years of being childless, yet they persevered and continued to stay together as a couple, laying the foundation of a home infused with *kedusha* and *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) while refusing to succumb to society's demoralization of itself. And only due to their efforts was mankind saved and turned a new page in history. 🕊

LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV I)



WITH
RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Our *choshuve Yungerlite* (Kollel Rabbis) are having an unbelievable start to the new *Zman* (semester) learning the complex laws of *Basar B'chalav* (meat and milk) first Seder in the Kollel.

We all know that *Basar B'chalav* is unique in that it comprises three different prohibitions. 1) One may not cook, 2) eat, or 3) derive any benefit from meat and milk that has been cooked together. One may think that any observant Jew that observes *kashrus* and is careful what enters his mouth, should be clear and safe from having *Hano'oh* (benefit) from this forbidden mixture as well.

Here are examples of beneficial use that can come up for anyone and that one should be wary of:

- One may not engage in any commerce involving *Basar B'chalav*. One who owns a restaurant with non-Jewish clientele, may not serve *Basar B'chalav*.
- One may not feed meat and milk to dogs (and according to some even if the dogs are not his own). Thus, one who owns a dog must

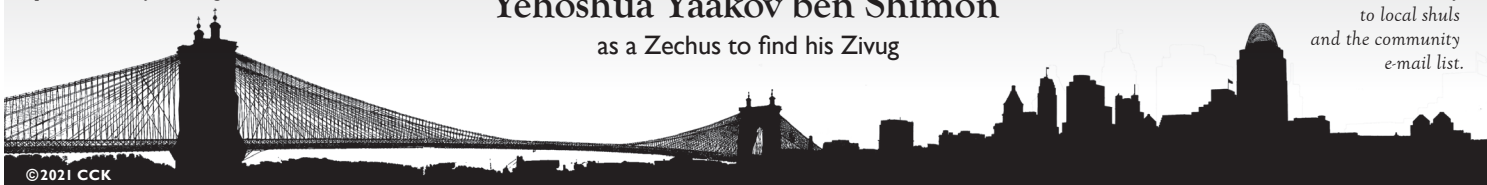
PLEASE KEEP TINOK BEN SHOSHANA IN MIND IN YOUR TEFILLOS

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV I)

CONTINUED

ascertain that the dog food contains no biblically prohibited *Basar B'chalav*. If, however, the meat is from a non-kosher animal, the food may be used.

-If *Basar B'chalav* becomes mixed into other foods in a manner that it is not *batel* (nullified), the food may not be eaten. According to some *Poskim*, one may sell the entire mixture to a non-Jew if the value of the *Basar B'chalav* is deducted from the price.

-One who purchased *Basar B'chalav* by mistake may not return it for a refund. Returning the food is a form of sale which constitutes beneficial use of *Basar B'chalav*. A Rav should be consulted.

However, if the food was purchased from a Jew, the seller may be required to give a refund even if the food has been discarded, since the sale is not valid. See *Choshen Mishpat* 234:4. 🕒

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rav Moshe Shapiro and a student were once getting a ride in a taxi in Israel when the driver asked if they would mind if he stopped for a falafel. When they said they did not, the taxi driver stopped at the closest falafel stand that he saw and was back in minutes with a nice big falafel. The man jumped back in the car and was about to take a bite when Rav Shapiro stopped him by saying, "Nu, you did not make a *b'racha* (blessing)?" The cabbie gave Rav Shapiro a quizzical look. "*Kevod Horav*, I'm not religious." "And therefore you cannot make a *b'racha*?" Rav Shapiro asked right back. "Rabbi I don't want to give you all the detail, but I do things a lot worse than skipping a *b'racha*!" "And therefore you can't make a *b'racha*!?" "Rabbi, from me G-d doesn't need any *b'rachos*." "You know you are not saying anything logical." "I



Kumsitz for the Bochorim!

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

After the flood was brought, the Torah tells "*vayisha'er ach Noach*," that only Noach was left. There is a rule in expounding the Torah, that any time there is an exclusion followed immediately by another, the Torah means to include something else. Here the words *vayisha'er* and *ach* are both exclusionary terms, and it is here, says Ba'al Haturim, that the Torah is hinting that even though the world was destroyed, the *passuk* is including that there was someone that was left behind. That someone, our sages tell us, was Og the giant. 🕒

know," acknowledged the taxi driver, and recited the *b'racha* on his falafel sandwich. "No matter what you have done in life," Rav Shapiro told the man, "G-d still wants to hear from you!" 🕒



Hoshana Rabbah night learning!

NEW!

THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART I)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The advent of the golem (an artificial man brought to life using mystical powers) in Jewish history is dated as early as the Talmudic Era, nearly 2,000 years ago. The Talmud in *Sanhedrin* (65a) records that Rava created a golem which was subsequently destroyed by Rav Zeira. Rashi (ibid) explains that Rava utilized *Sefer Yetzirah's* kabbalistic formula to create his golem.

Although the golem is brought to life by the kabbalistic formula prescribed in *Sefer Yetzirah*, the golem mentioned in the Talmud, as well as all subsequent golems, were mute by nature. Rabbeinu Bachya (*Bereishis* 2:7), Maharsha (*Sanhedrin* 65a), and Maharal (ibid) elaborate why a golem by definition cannot be imbued with the ability to speak.

So, there is clear evidence that a golem appeared in the Talmudic Era. But that wasn't the end of the history of golems. A golem is known to have been created around the 16th century and is actually the source of a lengthy *halachic* debate. Chacham Tzvi (responsum 93) writes that his grandfather – Rabbi Eliyahu of Chelm – created a golem. Chacham Tzvi goes on to question if a golem can be counted as part of a *minyan*. Rabbi Yakov Emden, son of Chacham Tzvi, tells the story of this golem in more detail in his autobiography *Megillas Sefer* (Chapter 1). Based on the family tradition, Rabbi Emden describes: Rabbi Eliyahu made a golem which couldn't speak but assisted Rabbi Eliyahu like a servant. The golem, which had a paper glued onto its forehead inscribed with the holy name of Hashem, became bigger and stronger by the day. Watching his golem become more powerful, Rabbi Eliyahu feared that it would soon become destructive. Rabbi Eliyahu ripped the paper off its head and the golem was immediately transformed into a heap of dirt. However, Rabbi Eliyahu didn't escape unscathed. As he approached his golem to destroy him, the golem struck Rabbi Eliyahu and injured him.

The above sources establish with reliability that the golem isn't a mythological creature out of a book of legends and fables. Our question, therefore, is simply whether there is evidence that the Maharal of Prague actually created a golem. You may be wondering, of course the Maharal made a golem? Don't we all know the famous stories about Yossele the Golem of Prague and his heroic actions?

To be continued... 🕒