

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
Hersh Leib *ben Moshe a"h*  
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his *neshamah*

## Feeding the Animals – II

## PARSHAS NO'ACH 5776

We have previously examined the monumental task facing No'ach in this week's *parshah*. Not only was he charged with taking on all the world's creatures as travelling companions, but he also had to provide for this considerable crew for a full year.

Furthermore, we remarked that the *passuk* containing these instructions seems to be replete with superfluities: וְאַתָּה קַח-לָךְ מִכָּל-מַאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל... וְהָיָה לְךָ וְלָהֶם לְאֹכֶלָה – “And you, take for you from all food that is eaten... and it shall be for you and for them to be eaten” (*Bereishis 6:21*). Why all the emphasis on the fact that food is eaten? Isn't that fairly obvious? After all, he wasn't taking food in order to stuff the mattresses. And why all the repetition: “Take food to eat... and it will be eaten”?

As expounded (*Mishnas Chayim, parshas No'ach, 5775*), R' Yehonasan Eibshitz clarifies these issues in his inimitable way with an intriguing explanation. Providing for all of these hungry mouths was nothing short of miraculous, a fact recognized right from the outset. Thus, Hashem instructed No'ach to take food only for himself, but from that would be miraculously generated enough provisions to satisfy all of the animals. “And it shall be for you – and for them – (enough) to eat.”

An alternate approach to the aforementioned issues is offered by R' Elchanan Wasserman (*Kovetz Ma'amarim*), as outlined below:

### **They Don't Make Them Like They Used to...**

When he was first created, man was given a severe warning. The *medrash* relates that in the beginning, Hashem “took him around to observe all of the trees of Gan Eden and said to him: ‘See My handiwork, how beautiful and wonderful it is... Be mindful that you do not spoil and destroy My world’” (*Koheles Rabbah 7:19*). Apparently, through the spiritual pollution spread by his actions, man can degrade his surroundings.

It seems that at various points in history, man did just that; and the world suffered various downgrades as a result. We get an inkling of this idea from the Mishnah in Sotah (9:12), which states:

רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר מִשּׁוֹם רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, מִיּוֹם שֶׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, אֵין יוֹם שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ קִלְקָלָה, וְלֹא יָרַד הַטַּל לְבָרְכָהּ, וְנִטְלָ טַעַם הַפְּרוֹת. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אוֹמֵר, אַף נִטְלָ שֶׁמֶן הַפְּרוֹת.

“Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said in the name of R' Yehoshua: From the day that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, there is no day that is not accursed. The descending dew no longer brings blessing, and the premier taste of fruits has been nullified. R' Yose says: Even the premier nutritional value of fruits has been nullified.”

The deterioration spoken of by the Mishnah was not the first such instance; another had already occurred in the wake of the *Mabul* (Flood). The *medrash* states that before this event,

the quality of the earth's produce was simply amazing. Instead of an annual affair, the pre-Deluge farmers would seed the earth once, and the ensuing crop was so robust, it would last for forty years! This idyllic situation continued until Hashem declared: "Who caused them to rebel against Me? Was it not because of (the complacency resulting from) their agricultural bounty?" (*Bereishis Rabbah 34:11*).

### **Preparing for the Lean Years**

The righteous No'ach, asserts R' Elchanan, was undoubtedly imbued with prophetic powers; as such, he was privy not only to the coming catastrophe of the Flood, but also to the general degradation that was to affect the world's produce. Thus, he thought it would be prudent to collect as much food as possible, even more than was needed for his entourage. In this way, he could preserve at least a portion of this produce of superior quality, which was soon to disappear.

That is why Hashem had to specify what the food was for: "Take for you from all food *that is eaten*." No'ach's intentions may have been reasonable, but Hashem informed him to desist. He was to take *only enough food to be eaten* for the duration of the Flood but not extra food for storage and preservation.

Why the repetition of this notion at the end of the *passuk*? It seems that No'ach was not yet ready to completely relinquish his idea. Not that he would disregard the command of Hashem, *chas v'Shalom*, but in his desire to preserve at least some of the superior comestibles, he hit upon another thought. As per Hashem's word, he would gather only the amount suitable for the journey in the *Teivah* (Ark), but then would cut down on the daily rations, so that a portion would remain for afterward. But Hashem dissuaded him even from this, stressing that all the provisions were to be consumed: "And it shall be for you and for them *to be eaten* (en route)."

Why, in fact, was Hashem so insistent on this point? After all, No'ach's plan did seem to have merit. There is always a run on a great product when, for some reason, it's about to be yanked from the market.

R' Elchanan provides two explanations on this point; one on moral grounds and one from a *halachic* standpoint. In general, a person is not supposed to be unmoved when the world suffers. As Chazal state: "One should always include himself with the *tzibbur* (public)" (*Berachos 30a*). Profiting from the destruction of the world would constitute a serious breach of *derech erez* (proper conduct).

Furthermore, Hashem's desire to prevent the hoarding of the super-produce could be understood in light of the laws governing an *Ir Hanidachas*. When an entire city is led astray after idol-worship, the Torah provides that this *Ir Hanidachas* – the Wayward City – becomes, for all intents and purposes, condemned property. Its inhabitants are put to the sword, and all of the city's possessions are destroyed; one may not derive any benefit from the effects left in the city. Similarly, R' Elchanan explains, the world that had exhibited such wickedness was classified as a (gigantic) *Ir Hanidachas*. While the survivors on the *Teivah* had to eat, of course, the world's produce that could be taken was limited to the amount necessary for survival. Surplus, on the other hand, was relegated to the category of the forbidden spoils of the condemned "city."