



No'ach 5786

After two harrowing years of war, there are many families here in Israel who must now shift to confront a new world without their loved ones. And for others, to help their many wounded family members - and, of course, the released hostages - start their lives afresh. Indeed, a most difficult and monumental task. The psychological issues of trauma, the therapeutic recuperation and eventual rehabilitation and return to a normal life-style are enormously challenging.

There is an unusual Midrash (B'reishit Rabba 30:8) which can address this reality and provide some comfort and encouragement to a person whose life feels like "it's been through a wringer" - shattered debris everywhere with no idea how to restore and put back the pieces and transcend the tragedy.

"R' Levi said: Everyone in whose regard HAYA is stated saw [the emergence of] a new world. R' Shmuel said: They are five:

No'ach - TAMIM HAYA B'DOROTAV,

yesterday [during the Flood], "stones were worn away by water" ... Then you read: "The sons of No'ach who emerged from the ark..." (B'reishit 9:18). The [change] is bewildering! However, it indicates that No'ach saw [the emergence of] a new world.

Yosef - "they tortured his legs with chains" (T'hilim 105:18), but now, "Yosef was the ruler"! (B'reishit 42:6). Amazing! However, it indicates that he saw a new world.

Moshe - yesterday, he was fleeing from Par'o, and now he was drowning him in the sea! Incredible! However, it indicates that he saw a new world.

Iyov - yesterday, "He spills my bile onto the ground" (Iyov 16:13), and now, "the Lord added to Iyov double of all that he had before"! (42:10). Unbelievable! However, it indicates that he saw a new world.

Mordechai - yesterday he was destined for hanging, and now he is hanging his hangers! Astonishing! However, it indicates that he saw a new world."

Rav Yissachar Frand, quotes the Ateret Mordechai, to explain the important take-away from this Chazal. When a person has been through a heartbreaking and traumatic experience, it is not at all easy to move beyond the pain and torment. The verb HAYA is the past tense. These five Biblical figures each

experienced different sufferings and hardships; it was part of their HAYA. To take No'ach as our example, the Midrash details: the abuse he suffered at the hands (and mouths) of his contemporaries who mocked and ridiculed his prediction about the Flood; his non-stop toiling in the Ark to care for all the animals; and his horror upon exiting the Ark to witness the utter devastation - the death and destruction - of all living matter. And yet, No'ach lived to see his family begin "a new world".

The question remains: how did No'ach (and the others) manage to actually envision a "new world"? And the answer: they had the courage and resolve to put the past behind them; what was, was - HAYA. Neither did they indulge in self-pity, nor sink into a depressive pit by allowing the nightmare of the past shadow and torture them. They looked ahead and up, and succeeded in creating something new and memorable.

Many are the stories of people who had every reason to despair and resign themselves to a slow death, and yet defied chaos and hopelessness and chose to rebuild their lives. The Bluzhever Rebbe, who was ready to grab the electrified fence at the notorious Bergen Belsen camp, and suddenly stopped when a stranger told him to believe in a tomorrow. Or the Klausenberg Rebbe

who, even after suffering the loss of his wife and eleven children, was able to reestablish his Chassidic dynasty and found the Laniado Hospital - the Sanz Medical Center - in Netanya. And today, we are reading the inspiring accounts of families here who, in the wake of their terrible loss, have launched many a charitable organization to help bereaved families and injured soldiers move beyond their HAYA. And equally heart-warming it is when we hear reports of wounded soldiers who, notwithstanding their physical handicaps, have bravely chosen to begin a new chapter in their lives.

Of course, this lesson should resonate beyond these extraordinary stories. From time to time, everyone experiences challenging times. Our daily routines are often interrupted by certain unwelcome news or some unfortunate downturn in our physical or financial wellbeing. Life, being what it is, will always contain such inevitabilities. The challenge is not only to endure and persevere during these trying turbulent periods, but once we passed through them, to declare a firm HAYA - refuse to dwell on the past, and focus on rebuilding a better and brighter future for ourselves. "Every storm runs out of rain, just like every dark night turns into day." (Gary Allen)

There is an unusual Midrash (B'reishit

Rabba 9:2) which incredibly asserts that our present world is not the first that HaShem created. "R' Abahu said: From here we learn that the Holy One blessed be He continuously created worlds and destroyed them, until He created the current ones..." Rav Soloveitchik argues that we can derive an important ethical mandate from this Chazal. We see from the Midrash that our world is an act of recreation. Now, to create something de novo is certainly more exciting and motivating, but generally speaking, taking an existing structure and refurbishing it, clearly lacks the enthusiasm and novelty of a "start from scratch" venture. And yet, this is exactly what HaShem did.

The message is unmistakable. If we are enjoined to emulate the ways of the Almighty, then perhaps we too are bidden to view our lives as a continuous act of recreation. We take the "givens" of our life and instead of trying to raze the entire "edifice", we engage in an undertaking of renovation and restoration. Such was how HaShem created our world, and such was how the five Biblical figures fashioned their upright and virtuous lives.

And us: We can only pray that HaShem give us the strength and resilience to do the very same with our lives!