



Some Interesting Q&A Related to Parashas Noach

Questions were submitted by readers over the years and posted on www.HalachaForToday.com

Reader's Question:

How can the rainbow be a bad sign? It was given to Noach as a covenant! Please explain.

Answer:

The rainbow was given to Noach as a sign that Hashem will never destroy the world again...BUT, it will be displayed in the heaven at such a time that Hashem really wants to destroy the world for its sins, yet doesn't do so based on the promise to Noach.

Hence, the Talmud (Chagiga 16a) says that one may not gaze at a rainbow as it is a bad sign that the world is steeped in sin, and one who gazes at a rainbow transgresses a sin.

Reader's Question:

You wrote "Hence, the Gemara (Chagiga 16a) says that one may not look at a rainbow as it is a bad sign that the world is steeped in sin, and one who gazes at a rainbow transgresses a sin." – what about the bracha of Zocher Habris? we say a bracha when performing an aveira?!

Answer:

The Bracha is recited after "seeing" a rainbow. The Bracha is thanking Hashem for remembering his covenant (not to destroy the world) and for keeping His promise not to destroy the world.. Any further "gazing" at the rainbow is the aveirah, not the initial seeing on which we recite the Bracha.

See also Sefer Michtav M'Eliyahu from Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler Zatzal, Vol. 4 page 10 for another approach regarding not gazing at the rainbow.

Reader's Question:

What is the Halacha regarding the rainbow that is visible many times over Niagara Falls? Do we recite a Brocha? Is it an Aveira to look at it?

Answer:

From the Poskim it seems that only a rainbow in the clouds in the sky is a "sign" and would require a bracha, and not a rainbow that is formed from the sun's shining on the water and causing a prism effect etc., which isn't in the sky.

It is not an Aveira to look at that either as that isn't a "rainbow" rather something that looks "rainbowlike". (See Shu"t Rivevos Ephraim Vol. 6 Siman 103 and Sefer Chavos Yair Perek 8 S"K 22. Some Poskim say to recite the bracha without Shem U'Malchus. Each person should consult his Rav for a psak halacha L'Ma'seh. See also Drashos HaRan, Drush 1 Dibur Hamaschil V'Zeh Hu Inyan HaKeshes where the great Rishon Rabbeinu Nissim discusses at length the nature of the rainbow and discusses some of the questions as to its origin etc.)

Reader's Question:

As I was growing up, I remember people would say that you're not supposed to look at the moon. Is there any truth to this?

Answer:

Yes, there is a lot of truth to this!

The Sefer Chareidim, written by one of the holy Mekubalim in Tzfas in the the times of the Bais Yosef and the Arizal, writes (Perek 45:5) "It is prohibited to gaze at a rainbow...It is likewise prohibited to gaze at the moon. Rabbeinu Meir used to be extremely stringent with this...as it is quoted in Sefer Shoshan sodos"

In the Sefer Taamei HaMinhagim (Kuntres Achron to Siman 464:22) he quotes the Sefer Shevet HaMussar that Al Pi Kabala it is just as bad to gaze at the moon as it is to gaze at a rainbow.

In the long Nusach of Vidui from Rabbeinu Avraham, father of the Shla HaKadosh, where he enumerates hundreds of possible sins that a person needs to do Teshuva for, he lists as one of the sins " Gazing at the [new] moon"

The Mishna Berura Siman 426:13 brings this as well, and says that by Kidush Levana when we must look at the moon before commencing the Bracha, according to some opinions the moon should be glanced at for a moment and that's all, and according to others it can be looked at for the duration of the Bracha, but it seems clear that any extra gazing at the moon is indeed something that should be avoided at best and may even be considered a sin!

Reader's Question:

Is there any source that indicates the names of the wives of Noach's sons?

Answer:

As per Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal in his Sefer L'Mchaseh Atik, here are the various opinions from the Midrash and the Rishonim

"The wives of Noach's children were the daughters of Elyakim son of Mesushelach. (Sifri Hayashan)

Some say the wife of Cham was the mother of Sichon [king of the Amorites] (Rabeinu Bechaye Parshas Chukas, quoting the Medrash)

Some say the wife of Shem was named Machlatyavan, the wife of Cham was named Samantabo and the wife of Yefes was named Katantanbo (Medrash Ksav Yad)

Some say the wife of Shem was named Machlah bas Beno"

Reader's Question:

What is the shresh/reason for the minhag of bringing into a new apartment a box of matzos and salt?

Answer:

In the Sefer Mat'amim HaChadash page 5 he writes that the reason for the minhag to bring bread, salt, candles and honey into a new home before residing there for the first time is because Hashem, before creating Adam and bringing into his new home [Gan Eden], prepared for him all sorts of trees with fruits for him to eat, and also the light that was in Gan Eden allowed Adam to see from one end of the world until the other end. Also before Noach entered the Teivah he stocked it with food and precious stones that lit up the Teiva.

In the Sefer Minhagei Belz it is written that Rav Ahron of Belz Zatzal used to tell people to bring in salt and bread into the home before occupying it, and to then distribute it to poor people. This is a Segulah for parnasah and Bracha in the new home.

Reader's Question:

I read that the waters at the time of the mabul were scalding hot. How on earth did the fish survive?

Answer:

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a) and Midrash Rabbah (Noach, 32:19, according to one opinion) indeed say that the fish (and possibly all the creatures of the sea) survived, as they did not follow the lead of the people and animals of that generation and practice immoral mating practices.

Most probably, the waters were only boiling on the surface and not in the depths of the sea.

Another option (as seems from the second opinion in the Midrash) is that there was one ocean that was not boiling (The Yam Okeanos, the Atlantic ocean) and all the fish went there to survive.

Additionally, according to some opinions, the Mabul did not destroy Eretz Yisroel, and thus the fish could have survived in the waters of Eretz Yisroel. (See Tal

Reader's Question:

My teacher told us that there were no monkeys on the Teiva. Is that possible?

Answer:

One who sees an elephant or a monkey for the first time recites the Bracha of Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam *Meshaneh HaBriyos*. (Shulchan Aruch Siman 225:8)

The reason these 2 animals are singled out for this Bracha, when apparently all animals in the animal kingdom have their own unique and often strange appearance, is as follows:

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109a) tells us that one of the punishments that Hashem meted out to the Dor Haflaga, The people who tried to build the tower to heaven and wage war on Hashem, was to turn them into monkeys. (Unlike the evolutionists who absurdly believe that mankind evolved from monkeys, Chazal tell us that in fact the opposite is true and monkeys actually evolved from man!)

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Thus, according to this Gemara, monkeys were seemingly not created during the 6 days of creation, and were only "changed" from humans as a punishment. Thus the Bracha of "*Meshane HaBriyos*- Changes the creatures" is perfectly understandable!

See Maleches Shlomo to Mishna in K'layim Perek 8:6 Dibur Hamaschil Hapil V'HaKof where he alludes to the above and also adds that elephants understand the language of man, and thus are "different" and require this Bracha. See his commentary at length for more on this. See also Meiri to Brachos 58 Dibur Hamaschil HaRoeh.

According to this, it is possible that there were no monkeys (and possibly no elephants) on the Teiva, as they were not in existence during the Mabul!

It is, however, possible that there were indeed monkeys and elephants at Creation, and Hashem turned the sinners into those creations, but not that they didn't exist before at all. And the bracha of "*Meshane HaBriyos*" can just mean that these 2 creations underwent a change during the Dor Haflaga.

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