



The Path To Follow NOACH

311

Oct. 24th 2009

6 Heshvan 5770

Publication
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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Forbidden to Relate

If Levi is speaking to Reuven and telling him negative things about Shimon, and Reuven relates this to Shimon (thus transgressing the laws concerning gossip), then it is forbidden for Shimon to tell Levi: "Why did you say this about me?" It is forbidden because Shimon would be spreading gossip about Reuven.

Even if Shimon does not say that he heard it from Reuven, it will be easy for Levi to understand on his own that it was Reuven who told Shimon about it. This is forbidden, and it is a sin that many people commit.

– The Chafetz Chaim

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE FAITH WITHOUT A LOVE FOR OTHERS (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

The Mishnah states, "There were ten generations from Adam to Noah...ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to indicate how great is His patience, for all those generations repeatedly angered Him, until Abraham our father came and received the reward of them all" (Pirkei Avot 5:2).

This teaching requires an explanation. Although Noah was a righteous and perfect man in his generations, he did not receive the reward of them all, and yet Abraham did. We can understand this according to the words of Sforno, who writes: "Although Noah reprimanded people for their depraved conduct in his time, he did not teach them about G-d, nor how to follow His ways, even if he was righteous and perfect in thought and deed" (Sforno, Genesis 6:8). Thus Noah did not truly admonish his generation. Furthermore, G-d said to him, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, for it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1), meaning that he did not pray for his generation, but instead he began to gather his sons and family, and he entered the ark.

As for Abraham, how did he react when G-d said to him: "Because the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah has become great, and because their sin has been very grave, I will descend and see whether they act according to its outcry, which has come to Me" (Genesis 18:20-21)? Before going to save his nephew Lot, he began to pray for the inhabitants of Sodom, as it is written: "Far be it from You to do a thing such as this, to put to death the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous would be like the wicked. Far be it from You! Will the Judge of the entire earth not perform justice?" (v.25).

Made in the Image of His Creator

It is known that if someone has complete faith in G-d, his faith will lead him to a love of G-d's creations, meaning that he will love others and make peace between them. How much more will he not be jealous of what others have. He will not envy or put his hand on other people's money, for since he has faith, he knows that all his sustenance is fixed for him by the Holy One, blessed be He. That being the case, why would he try to obtain money that belongs to others, which was not allotted to him and in no way belongs to him? All that has not been allotted to him will not come to him! When a person does not love others, it is a great indication that he does not firmly believe in Hashem. It is impossible for a person to believe in Hashem without loving Hashem's creations, for they were made in the image of the King, as it is written: "G-d said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). Whoever loves the King loves His handiwork, and whoever does not love His handiwork proves that he does not love the King. We learn just where this can lead to from what the Sages have said on the verse, "A hanging person is a curse of G-d" (Deuteronomy 21:23), namely: "This is a degradation of the King, in Whose image man is created, and the Israelites are G-d's children. This is comparable to two identical twin brothers. One became king, while the other was arrested for robbery and hanged. Whoever saw him would say, 'The king is hanging'" (Rashi ad loc.). The Sages have also said, "When a man suffers, what does the Shechinah say? 'My head aches, my arm aches!'" (Sanhedrin 46a). Therefore G-d suffers when the blood of the wicked is spilled, and even more so when the blood of the righteous is spilled.

When a person wants to cleave to the Holy One, blessed be He, and to demonstrate his great love for the Creator, he must cleave to His attributes.

As the Sages say in the Gemara, "What is the meaning of the text, 'You shall walk after the L-RD your G-d' [Deuteronomy 13:5]? Is it possible, then, for a human being to walk after the Shechinah? Has it not been said, 'The L-RD your G-d is a devouring fire' [ibid. 4:24]? However this means to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He" (Sotah 14a).

The Sages tell us that just as Hashem clothes the naked (having clothed Adam and Eve), we too should clothe the naked, and just as Hashem visits the sick (having visited Abraham), we too should visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, comforts mourners (having comforted Isaac), we too should comfort mourners, and just as He buries the dead (having buried Moses), we too should bury the dead. The Sages also say, "Just as He is gracious and compassionate, so too should you be gracious and compassionate" (Shabbat 133b).

Since Noah did not pray for the people of his generation or admonish them, it follows that he did not love them. If he had loved them, he would have worried that the waters of the flood would have destroyed them. He did not love them, however, since his faith in G-d was not perfect.

We learn something similar to this from the words of our Sages in the Midrash: "Noah went in with his sons...because of the waters of the flood" [Genesis 7:7]. ... He lacked faith: Had the waters not reached his ankles, he would not have entered the ark" (Bereshith Rabba 32:6).

This is extremely surprising. How could Noah, who is described as being "a righteous man, perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9), have possessed so little faith? The answer is that although he was righteous in his deeds, he still did not possess perfect faith. He was a tzaddik in deeds, but in faith he was no so firm. On the other hand, the faith of Abraham was firm and powerful, as the Creator of the world Himself testified: "He believed in the L-RD" (Genesis 15:6). This teaches us that Abraham possessed faith. Why did this faith exist in Abraham but not in Noah, although the Torah testifies that Noah was righteous? It is because Abraham prayed for the people of his generation, but Noah did not. Abraham admonished the people of his generation, but Noah did not. Hence Abraham received the reward of ten generations, including that of the flood, for had Abraham lived in the time of Noah, he would have prayed for them. He would have brought them to their senses, in which case the Holy One, blessed be He, may not have wiped them out in the flood.

Hence on the verse, "Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations," some of our Sages have said: "Only in his generations was he a righteous man. Had he flourished in the generation of Moses or Samuel, he would not have been called righteous" (Bereshith Rabba 30:9). If Noah had lived in the time of Abraham, he would have been considered almost insignificant, for if Abraham had lived in the time of the flood, he would have prayed for that generation and encouraged them to repent. In that case the Holy One, blessed be He, might have not brought the flood upon them.

AT THE SOURCE

As Water Reflects a Face

It is written, "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9).

This verse was interpreted by Rabbi Yosef Haim of Baghdad according to the passage, "As water reflects a face to a face, so one's heart is reflected to him by another" (Proverbs 27:19). In other words, in the way that a man acts with his fellowman, his fellowman will act with him.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen with water. Water reflects the image of a person without alteration, with exacting precision. Likewise the conduct of a person is reflected in his relationship with society and those around him.

Hence the verse states: "These are the generations of Noah" – the Torah is telling us by allusion that if a person is pleasant (noach) with others – if he is pleasant (noach) in his attitudes and good deeds, in his language and conduct – then the offspring of his actions will also be pleasant (noach), and society and those around him will also be pleasant with him.

The term noach, writes the Rav, is composed of the same letters as chen (grace), telling us by allusion that by acting in this way, we will find grace in the eyes of all who see us.

The Seven Days

It is written, "And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth" (Genesis 7:10).

Which seven days are these?

These are the days of mourning for the tzaddik, a period of time that delayed the onset of the flood. Hence the verse states "after the seven days."

Another explanation: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, delayed yet again after having waited 120 years for them to repent. Since they failed to do so, the verse states: "And it came to pass after the seven days."

Another explanation: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, changed the nature of the world for them. The sun rose in the west and set in the east, in order for them to understand, fear, and repent. However they failed to do so, which is why it is written: "And it came to pass after the seven days" (Avoth D'Rabbi Nathan 32a).

Emerging by their Families

It is written, "Every living thing, every creeping thing, and every bird... came out of the ark by their families" (Genesis 8:19).

The Gemara notes that they came out of the ark "by their families," not by themselves (Sanhedrin 108b).

Rabbi Yaakov Briel of Mantua Zatzal writes that the Sages say that every creature lacking bones does not live for more than 12 months. Now the judgment of the generation of the flood lasted 12 months, which means that the worms that entered the ark would have died before they could leave it. Nevertheless there remained creeping things that emerged from the ark. Which creeping things were these? They were the "families," the descendants of those creatures which had entered the ark, but had died.

The Holy Tongue

It is written, "All the earth was of one language and the same words" (Genesis 11:1).

Rashi explains: "One language – the holy tongue."

Rabbi Yechiya Korah Zatzal used to say, "The mitzvah of knowing the holy tongue is the foundation of the entire Torah. Although it is not among the 613 mitzvot, it is part of the study of Torah, for it is impossible to study Torah without knowing the holy tongue. This is because one must study the laws of the Torah and its mitzvot by means of the 13 rules of interpretation, which is impossible if one does not know the holy tongue.

Furthermore, the reward for studying Torah is in proportion to a person's understanding of the holy tongue, since one who does not understand its subtleties cannot understand the Torah's words and aims with any degree of precision. As such, a person's reward will be greater, for he can study and understand things according to their true sense. Such is not the case for someone who cannot penetrate the subtleties of the language. He will be unable to understand the true nature of things, and even if he studies much, his efforts will be useless.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Raphael Aharon ben Shimon

Rabbi Raphael Aharon was born to Rabbi David ben Shimon, who was known as the Tzuf Devash, on Tammuz 20, 5607 in Rabat, Morocco. He studied mostly with his father, who wanted to see his son perfect himself in every field of knowledge, as well as every good middah in the entire Torah. He taught him how to write Torah scrolls as well as how to perform shechita and circumcision. Rabbi Raphael also studied Torah with the kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Bohbot, who was known for his holiness and piety.

In 5620, Rabbi Raphael had his Bar Mitzvah and married at the same time. He married the daughter of the gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Benoualid, who was known as a miracle worker. He eventually was named as the director of his father's yeshiva, a position that required him to travel and collect funds in the countries of the Maghreb. When he arrived in Fez, he established a rapport with its Torah scholars. Because of its great age and beautiful synagogues, Fez and its customs greatly fascinated him. He wrote in a letter, "During my travels, I lived in a marvelous place whose synagogues I visited, synagogues that I beheld in all their beauty and splendor. Sanctity and purity hover upon them."

Over the course of the years, Rabbi Raphael organized a "Dovev Siftei Yeshenim" society, whose primary aim was to publish the writings of Torah scholars in the Maghreb, who had been neglected for numerous years. It is said that one day, as he prayed in the synagogue of the "Toshavim" (local Jews) in Fez – as opposed to the synagogue of the "Megurashim" (Jews who had been exiled from Spain) – he was stunned to see that the synagogue had only one prayer book. This lone siddur was used by the shaliach tzibur, and from it he would recite the prayers. Rabbi Raphael then decided to publish the "Ahavat HaKadmonim" siddur, which is "a prayer book for the entire year in accordance with the customs of Fez."

On Shevat 25, 5651, after great pressure and numerous requests, Rabbi Raphael agreed to serve as the Chacham Bashi (Chief Rabbi) of Egypt in place of the gaon Rabbi Yom Tov Israel Zatzal, a position that he held for 31 years. His primary goal was rendering Halachic decisions to the people in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch without trying to be stringent. "A teacher who wants to be stringent and very pious," he wrote, "should do so with himself."

Rabbi Raphael enacted a certain number of important decrees for his community. For example, he reestablished the custom in Egypt for the shaliach tzibur to repeat the prayers, as is done in Jewish communities around the world. He also decided not to allow weddings in synagogues, in order not to infringe upon their holiness and modesty. A famous financial decree concerned mohalim who wanted to be paid for performing circumcisions. Rabbi Raphael fought against those who claimed that ein milah lelo priah ("there is no circumcision without priah") – the term priah meaning a part of the circumcision, though it can also mean wages – by writing in a letter: "On the contrary, we make sure to ask fathers to give their sons to us for circumcision. This is in accordance with the custom of the holy town of Jerusalem, as well as the lands of the Maghreb and numerous other places I have been, where mohalim exert tremendous effort in order to fulfill the mitzvah of milah. If the child's father is poor, the mohel often gives him financial support. This is what we have heard, and it is what our forefathers have transmitted to us. We have never heard of a mohel receiving financial compensation!"

A TRUE STORY

I WILL WAIT

The gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Ezra Attiya Zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef, greatly admired the tremendous sanctity of Rabbi Raphael. One day, Rabbi Raphael was asked to officiate at a wedding for one of the wealthy members of the community. Before the ceremony under the Chuppah began, the Rav was told that among the wedding guests was a woman who was dressed immodestly.

Rabbi Raphael made it clear to the father of the bride that this woman had to immediately leave the synagogue. Even after he was told that this woman was very influential and people were reluctant to offend her in any way, he refused to listen. He said, "As long as this woman does not leave this place, I will not conduct the wedding."

People were obligated, upon the Rav's order, to ask the woman to leave. However she stubbornly refused to heed the Rav, and decided to stay. Rabbi Raphael sat down and said to those around him, "I will wait for her to leave the miniature Sanctuary." This woman, who had demonstrated so much insolence towards the Rav, was punished a few minutes later, for she suddenly collapsed and died.

When he reached the age of 80, Rabbi Raphael left his rabbinical position in Egypt and settled in the Holy Land. On Wednesday, Cheshvan 10, 5689, he rendered his soul to his Creator and was buried on the Mount of Olives, next to the sanctified place of the Temple.

Equivalent to Murder

It is written, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed" (Genesis 9:6).

Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan Zatzal of Radin, the author of Chafetz Chaim, finds an allusion in this verse to a teaching of our Sages in the Gemara: "Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak said, 'He who publicly shames his fellow, it is as though he has shed blood'" (Bava Metzia 58b).

He wrote, "Whoever sheds the blood of man – this alludes to one who shames his fellow in public, meaning that he sheds the blood of man ba'adam [in man] by making his face blanch when he becomes pale; his blood shall be shed – meaning that he has the same status as a murderer." Our Sages have also said, "Better for a man to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to shame his fellow in public" (Berachot 43b).

A story is told concerning the gaon Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi Horowitz Zatzal, the author of Shnei Luchot HaBrit, who was known as the Shelah. He was the Rav of Frankfurt am Main, where he taught Torah. The home of Rabbi Yeshaya was open to everyone, both to students who came to shelter themselves in his shadow and learn Torah and the fear of Heaven from him, and to simple Jewish drifters who wanted to eat something and rest their bodies in a warm bed, exhausted from the harsh realities of living without a home.

One day two silver spoons, which were quite valuable at the time, went missing from the home of the Rav. Since numerous attempts to locate them proved useless, the family began to suspect a student who often frequented the Rav's home. In fact after a careful search, the stolen spoons were found in this student's bag. The stolen items, and fact that they were discovered in the student's bag, became the subject of conversation in town. The members of the community were furious at the brazenness of this student, who returned evil for good by stealing silverware from the home of their venerated Rav, who had welcomed this student into his home and taken care of all his material and spiritual needs. The student was overcome with anguish and guilt over the tremendous shame that he experienced, and he fled the city of the Shelah for another town. In his resentment, he even converted to Christianity.

Nevertheless, he found no peace of mind in his new home, and his heart was bitter over not having acted honestly or taken to the right path. He began to wander from town to town and from country to country, until he finally arrived

in the great city of Constantinople, where he started to engage in commerce. In fact he eventually became one of the wealthiest men in town, and news of his intelligence and wealth reached the ears of the king's ministers. This man, the Rav's former student, found favor in the eyes of these ministers, who put him in charge of customs in the city of Jaffa in Eretz Israel.

The thought of the holy city of Jerusalem came to Rabbi Yeshaya HaLevi one day, and he considered moving there. He immediately put this idea into motion, took his belongings, and left for Jerusalem. He boarded a ship and began to prepare with sanctified zeal for his arrival in the Holy Land. When the Rav disembarked, his former student – whose bag had contained the silverware that had been stolen from the Rav's home, and who later converted to Christianity – saw him, but the Rav did not recognize him. His former student showed him tremendous respect and asked him to come to his home by the edge of the sea. In this way, he said, the Rav could rest from his long journey before traveling to Jerusalem.

Rabbi Yeshaya was in no position to refuse this offer, since it had come from an important official. He therefore agreed to travel to his home in order to recuperate from his exhausting journey.

When they arrived at the home of the former student, he offered the Rav all kinds of delicacies in order to help him regain his strength. After a certain time, he took him by the arm and showed him all the rooms in his home, displaying all his wealth and glory. They eventually came to a room that was larger than the rest, one that was filled with weapons. The Rav's former student then took a large pointed knife out of a bag, turned to the Rav, and said to him: "Rabbi, recite vidui, because I brought you here to slice your throat!"

The Rav was overcome with fear, and he began to weep. He tried to dissuade his former student from carrying out his deadly plan. He said to him, "What did I do to you that made you bring me here to kill me? For what possible reason could you spill completely innocent blood?" However he did not say a word.

Rabbi Yeshaya continued to ask for his life to be spared, but the former student suddenly replied with a voice that raged with anger: "The Rav is pleading to an ear that won't hear. Recite vidui quickly, lest I take this knife and kill you before you can say it!" When Rabbi Yeshaya realized that he had fallen into a deadly trap without any way to escape, he began to pour out his soul before the Holy One, blessed be He, confessing with abundant tears. His former student stood before him, his knife in hand, as he spoke. When the Rav finished his confession, the student approached him and said, "Lie on the floor and spread out your arms and legs." The Rav obeyed. He then said, "Stretch out your neck and prepare yourself to be slaughtered."

He then grabbed the Rav's neck in one hand as he held the knife in the other. He said to the Rav, "Close your eyes and recite Shema Israel before I slaughter you!" The Rav closed his eyes and, his voice trembling, began to recite Shema Israel with reverence and love. He had prepared himself to submit both body and soul to the hands of his Creator, and his soul almost left him when he reached the word echad. Suddenly his former student lowered his head towards Rabbi Yeshaya, placed his mouth on his neck, and kissed him. He said, "My teacher and my Rav, stand up. Please forgive me. I did this for your own good."

Rabbi Yeshaya immediately opened his eyes and got up, unable to believe what he had heard. He said, "Who are you? Are you an angel sent by the Holy One, blessed be He, to save me from the abyss?" His former student replied, "I'm no angel. I'm your former student. I used to cleave to the dust of your feet for many years, but in the end I went astray and converted to Christianity."

The Rav quickly remembered the student in whose bag his stolen silverware had been found, and who had eventually converted to Christianity because of the shame that his theft had caused him. In fact his hair stood on end as he remembered the incident of long ago. Drawing strength from his soul, he began to question his former student as to what he had just done: “Why did you want to kill me at first, but then suddenly changed your mind?”

The student replied, “Know that I never had any intention of killing you, as you thought. I am aware of your good deeds and I know that you are a great tzaddik. When you got off the ship today, I immediately recognized you and remembered what had happened to me. I thought to myself that it is not fitting for my teacher, who has just arrived in the Holy Land, to go to Jerusalem with a stain on his soul, one that renders him liable to death.

“I took pity on you, for your soul contains a small blemish on account of me, when you took the stolen silverware out of my bag in front of everyone. Because of that – because of the shame and anguish that I experienced in public – I left Judaism. I later converted, and thus you drove me away from G-d’s heritage. Although you did this in order to save your money, you could have done it discreetly, not publicly, in front of everyone. This is considered a tremendous sin for you. Yet Hashem knows the truth – He knows that I never wanted to avenge myself on you, for I had only good intentions. The pain that I made you experience today will serve to atone for that fact that you caused a soul in Israel to perish. Now your soul is pure and free of all sin, and you can enter Jerusalem like pure olive oil.”

Rabbi Yeshaya listened in silence as his former student was saying all this. Indeed, not a word left his lips. When his former student saw that the Rav’s face was filled with dread, he fell to his feet and said: “My teacher and my Rav, forgive me for the pain that I caused you. He Who probes heart and mind knows that I did it with good intentions.” The Rav replied, “I forgive you.” His former student then threw himself on the Rav’s neck and embraced him, and he escorted the Rav to Jerusalem with great honors. The pious Shelah ascended to Jerusalem and took it upon himself to make amends. During his numerous discourses before attentive audiences, he spoke of the gravity of publicly shaming others, something that is truly equivalent to murder, as the verse states: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed.” The Rav would add, “Better for a man to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to shame his fellow in public.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA

The Waters of the Flood Purified the Earth

It is written, “The rain was upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights” (Genesis 7:12).

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, make the waters of the flood rain upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights, neither more nor less? We may say that the generation of the flood defiled the earth to such a degree that the Holy One, blessed be He, was forced to destroy His world, as it is written: “He wiped out every living thing from the face of the earth” (Genesis 7:23). Only Noah and his family remained of that entire generation. Since the earth was defiled, Hashem had to, as it were, purify it. How do things become purified? By the waters of the mikveh, which contain 40 seahs of water!

This is why Hashem made it rain for 40 days and 40 nights, corresponding to the 40 seahs of the mikveh, which purifies everything that is impure.

– Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita

When Noah emerged from the ark, the Holy One, blessed be He, promised him that He would never bring another flood upon the world to destroy all flesh. He also gave him a sign, the rainbow, as it written: “I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I place a cloud over the earth, and the bow will be seen in the cloud, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living being among all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:13-15).

In the Gemara (Berachot 59a), Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says that one who sees a rainbow should prostrate himself (since it is a manifestation of Hashem’s glory – Rashi), as it is written: “Like the appearance of a bow that would be in the clouds... When I saw it, I fell upon my face” (Ezekiel 1:28). However most of the Sages do not think that one who sees a rainbow should prostrate himself, for it would appear as if he were prostrating to the rainbow. Nevertheless, it is clear that we must recite the blessing regarding rainbows upon seeing one of them.

The Gemara states: “What blessing does one recite? ‘Blessed is He Who remembers the covenant.’ ... Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka says: He recites, ‘Who is faithful to His covenant and fulfils His word.’ ... Abaye says: ‘Combine both statements’” (Berachot 59a). The Maharsha explains this blessing in the following way: He is faithful to the covenant that He made with Noah to never bring another flood upon the world. Furthermore, there is nothing new under the sun, and the rainbow was not created right after the flood, but during the six days of Creation. It was among the ten things that were created on the eve of Shabbat, as the sun was going down. Hence the blessing ends with “fulfils His word.” That is, the rainbow was created by His word during the six days of Creation, and it is now that He is showing it to us.

Rabbi Yosef Karo (Orach Chaim 229:1) gives the following version of the blessing: “One who sees a rainbow must say, ‘Blessed are You...Who remembers the covenant, is faithful to His covenant, and fulfills His word.’” The author of Kneset HaGedolah states that the wording of the blessing as it appears in the Gemara is accurate, and the fact that many people modify it is a mistake. Our teacher Yosef Haim of Baghdad, in the work Ben Ish Hai (Eikev, First Year), cites the Mahari Zatzal in stating that there are two kinds of rainbows. We must therefore say the blessing without mentioning Hashem’s Name, since we do not know which is which. However the Ben Ish Hai believes that there is nothing in these words (which are a simple commentary) to justify not reciting the blessing with the Name of Hashem, especially since all the great Poskim are not in agreement with the Mahari on this point. Nevertheless, one who wants to be very meticulous in reciting the blessing should do so without mentioning Hashem’s Name, only thinking of it, and he will not be criticized for it.

It is not fitting for a person who sees a rainbow to recount it to someone else. As Rabbi Avraham Danzig wrote, “I have found in a book whose name I have forgotten that we must not tell someone about a rainbow that we have seen, since it is a way of speaking evil” (Chayei Adam 63:4).

In his book Machazik Beracha, the Chida states that if one recites the blessing upon seeing a rainbow, he can recite it again if he sees another rainbow within 30 days. The Mishnah Berurah believes that it is comparable to the blessing on thunder, which we sometimes recite several times a month.

With regards to the Mishna’s pronouncement that “Whosoever takes no thought of his Maker’s honor, it would be better had he never entered the world,” the Gemara states: “What does this mean? Rabbi Abba said: ‘It refers to one who looks at the rainbow’...for it is written: ‘Like the appearance of a bow that would be in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brilliance all around. That was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the L-RD’ [Ezekiel 1:28]. ... Anyone who looks at three things, his eyes become dim: At the rainbow, at the Nassi, and at the priests” (Chagigah 16a). The book Iyun Yaakov states that this refers to gazing attentively; simply looking is allowed in all these cases. Indeed, it is a mitzvah with regards to looking at the Nassi, as it is written: “Your eyes shall behold your teacher” (Isaiah 30:20). The same applies to the rainbow, for we must recite the blessing on it. The book Zechira states that it is dangerous for a person to see a rainbow too often. It also states that a rainbow amid rain is an indication of mercy, and a rainbow without rain is an indication of severity. A rainbow seen in the morning alludes to the children of Jacob, and a rainbow seen in the afternoon alludes to the nations of the world.