

NOACH

No Pot of Gold

2005 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

NOACH (Genesis, 6:9-11:32) "No Pot of Gold..." It's beautiful; it's a sign of ugliness. When you see it, you recite a prayer of thanks; when you see it, you're not supposed to show it to anyone. It is a sign of hope; it is a sign of frustration. It is a sign of divine compassion; it is a sign of divine wrath. Somewhere, over the rainbow, SomeOne is remembering a promise. Somewhere, under the rainbow, someone has broken a promise. ----- The world was destroyed. The children of Adam did not fulfill their mission. They lived lives of evil and corruption. They were petty and they were wicked. (See "Sweat the Big Stuff . . . and it's ALL Big Stuff!") They forfeited their right to exist. G-d destroyed them and started over with Noah. G-d wanted to assure Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy the world. He therefore made a promise, and "signed" his promise with a divine signature -- the rainbow: *"I will make My covenant with you . . . there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth. . . I have placed My rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen among the clouds. Then I will recall the covenant . . ."* (Genesis, 9:11, 13-15) There is no Hebrew word for rainbow; is the same as the word for bow. Whether it is a multitude of colors of refracting light in the moisture-laden atmosphere or a weapon that propels arrows, the word is the same – bow. The symbolism of the rainbow is the direction of the bow. When you shoot an arrow at a target, the bow arches in the direction of the target. By setting the rainbow in the sky, arching toward Heaven, G-d is, in a sense, aiming His arrows AWAY from the earth. He is remembering His peace treaty. -----

----- After a rainstorm, you look up into the clouds, and there it is! There is no denying the splendor of a rainbow. The stark beauty of those colors in the clouds is uplifting; it's inspiring. It tells us of the calm after the storm. It tells us that G-d is watching over us. It reminds us that the Master of the World has committed Himself to the continued existence of mankind. What wonderful news! It compels us to recite a blessing: "Blessed are You, our G-d, King of the world, Who remembers the covenant, is trustworthy in His covenant, and fulfils His word." It is, therefore, curious that this bit of spiritual upliftment is not to be shared. The Chayei Adam writes that if you see a rainbow, it is not appropriate to point it out to anyone else. Why should that be? Why should I not allow my friends and neighbors to be as inspired as I am? Before I give you the Chayei Adam's reason, let us analyze this a bit. Moishie misbehaves. His father gives him a whack. Afterwards, Moishie's father decides, "He's just a little kid; he makes mistakes. I will never again whack Moishie. As a matter of fact, I promise I will never again whack Moishie. I am going to write on an index card, 'I will never again

whack Moishie.' I will keep that card in my shirt pocket as a reminder.'" The next day we see Moishie and his Dad taking a walk. Moishie is playing around, doing whatever little Moishies do. Suddenly, we see Dad reaching into his pocket. He takes out the piece of paper and reads out loud, "I will never again whack Moishie. I will never again whack Moishie." What does this picture tell us? It tells us that Moishie's Dad WANTS to whack Moishie! It tells us that Moishie is misbehaving again. It tells us that if not for the promise that Moishie's Dad made not to whack him, he would do it again! G-d destroyed the world because it was wicked. G-d then promised not to destroy the world again, even if it is wicked. Then He designated the rainbow as a reminder of that promise. What does it mean when there is a rainbow in the sky? It means that if not for His promise never to destroy the world when it is evil, HE WOULD DO IT AGAIN! That is why we recite a blessing. We thank G-d for sparing us. But why don't we tell our friends? Why don't we announce to the world: "Hey, guess what, guys! G-d's annoyed! In fact, he would destroy us if not for His rainbow-promise. You'd better recite the blessing and get your act together!" The Chayei Adam says that the reason we don't point out rainbows to other people is that it is like spreading gossip. When I show you a rainbow, I am saying that the world is evil, and G-d is tempted to destroy it. I'm not allowed to say that. I am bad-mouthing the entire human race. That's not right! Our sages tell us that there were certain times in history when rainbows never appeared. During the lifetimes of certain righteous people, the world didn't need rainbows because the merit of those good people protected the world. Perhaps the reason I see a rainbow is because G-d wants ME to see it. If He wants you to see it, He will certainly make sure that you do. It's not my job to tell you that G-d is angry. Perhaps the purpose of my seeing the rainbow is so that I will become a better person. Our Rabbis tell us that a person should view the world as half righteous and half wicked. He should view himself the same way. As a result, one Mitzvah will tip the scales toward redemption of the world. One sin will do just the opposite. Do you see a rainbow? Good. First, thank G-d for His patience and His compassion. Then, join Him in remembering His covenant. Then, become a better person. You'll be better off, and so will the rest of the world. Come to think of it, maybe there really IS a pot of gold out there after all. Have a great Shabbos. Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz