

The Human Element in Teshuva

Based on an article by Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

Source 1: Shulchan Aruch Ch. 592 – Tefilat Musaf on Rosh Hashana

תקצב תפילת מוסף בקול רם וסדר התקיעות. וכו' ד' קעינים:

א. (א) "מחזיר שליח צבור ה' התפלה, (ב) ותוקעין י על סדר הברכות למלכיות תשר"ת פעם אחת ולזכרונות תש"ת ולשופרות תר"ת. יועקשו נוהגים לתקע למלכיות תשר"ת שלש פעמים ולזכרונות תש"ת שלש פעמים ולשופרות תר"ת שלש פעמים: הגה ויש אומרים שתוקעים י (ג) תשר"ת למלכיות פעם אחת

The Shaliach Tzibbur repeats the Amida. The shofar is sounded according to the order of brachot for Malkhiyot, Zichronot and Shofarot

Source 2: Review of the structure of the Amida for Musaf: Yehuda Shurpin

Malchiyot (Sovereignty)

Rosh Hashanah commemorates the day that Adam, the first person, was created. It was the creation of man that crowned G d as King of the universe. While there were creations before man, including angels, one is only king over subjects, not slaves (angels) or animals. When Adam was created and recognized that G d was Master and King of the universe, he felt that it was necessary for all of creation to acknowledge this, transforming the day of his creation into the day of G d's coronation.

Thus, in this blessing we start off by reciting verses expressing our gratitude that G-d has established a special relationship with His nation, and that He is King and Master of all the world. We end this blessing with an expression of hope and confidence that the day will come when all nations of the world will recognize G d's reign over the universe.

Zichronot (Remembrances)

As King, G d judges how loyal each one of his subjects was throughout the year. G d is a G d of mercy; in judging us, He not only remembers our every action—for good or not so good—throughout the year, but He also remembers everything that has occurred throughout the history of creation that may stand in our good stead.

Thus, while this blessing includes verses that remind us how G d recalls everything we did, we also recite verses that express how G d remembers the righteous acts of our ancestors, concluding with the blessing ". . . Who remembers His covenant."

Shofrot (Sounding of the Shofar)

The shofar blasts signify both the coronation of the King as well as the announcement of the King's arrival.

The Talmud tells us that G d says to us on Rosh Hashanah, "Say before Me verses whose themes are sovereignty, remembrances and shofar. Sovereignty, so that you should crown Me king over you; remembrances, so that I should remember

you for good; and with what? With a shofar.”⁷ Thus, it is through the shofar that the first two “objectives,” coronation and remembrance, are accomplished. Additionally, the sounding of the shofar reminds us of the two greatest events in all time: the giving of the Torah and the coming of Mashiach. Thus, we recite verses describing the revelation at Sinai as well as a prayer for the sounding of the great shofar heralding the final redemption.

Source 3: Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

Each *beracha* is tightly organized, consisting of a series of **three verses from the Torah, three verses from the Prophets, three verses from the *Ketuvim* (Holy Writings), and a concluding statement of the Torah, totaling ten verses per unit....**A most unlikely figure appears in the center of this carefully orchestrated prayer. **In the heart of the *Amida*, as we conclude the *Zikhronot* and transition between the biblical verses and the blessing itself,** situated midway through the *Amida*, preceded by the *berakha* of *Malkhiyot* and the first half of *Zikhronot* and followed by the second half of *Zikhronot* and the *berakha* of *Shofarot*.

וְגַם אֶת נֹחַ בְּאַהֲבָה זָכַרְתָּ. וַתִּפְקְדֵהוּ בְדַבָּר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים בְּהִבְיָאֵךְ אֶת מִי
הַמְּבֹוֹל לְשַׁחַת כָּל בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי רָע מַעֲלֵלֵיהֶם. עַל כֵּן זָכְרוֹנוּ בָּא לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהַרְבּוֹת זְרַעוֹ כְּעַפְרוֹת תַּבַּל. וְצִאֲצֹאָיו כְּחוֹל הַיָּם. כְּכַתוּב בְּתוֹרַתְךָ
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֵת כָּל הַחַיָּה וְאֵת כָּל הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּיבָה וַיַּעֲבֵר
אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁכּוּ הַמַּיִם :

And Noah, too, was lovingly remembered as You redeemed him with a proclamation of mercy and redemption when you brought the flood waters to destroy all flesh because of their evil deeds. Therefore did his memory appear before You, Hashem our God, to increase his progeny as the dust of the earth and his descendants as the sand of the sea, as is written, “And God remembered Noah and all of the animals and the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God sent a wind on the land and the waters receded.”

Source 4: Mahzor: Selections from Malchuyot/the shift

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל לְתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁלֵא עָשָׂנוּ
כְּגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה שְׁלֵא שָׁם חִלְקֵנוּ כְּהֵם
וְגוֹרְלֵנוּ כְּכֹל הַמוֹנִם :

It is our obligation to praise the Master of all, to ascribe greatness to the Creator of [the world in] the beginning: that He has not made us like the nations of the lands, and has not positioned us like the families of the earth; that He has not assigned our portion like theirs, nor our lot like that of all their multitudes.

וּבְדַבְּרֵי קִדְשֶׁךָ כְּתוּב לֵאמֹר : כִּי לִיהוָה הַמְּלוֹכָה וּמִשָּׁל בְּגוֹיִם : וְנֶאֱמַר יְהוָה
מִלֶּךְ גְּאוֹת לְבֶשׁ לְבֶשׁ יְהוָה עַז הַתְּאֶזֶר אֵף תִּכּוֹן תַּבַּל בַּל תִּמּוּט : וְנֶאֱמַר שְׂאוּ

שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנְשָׂאוּ פְתִיחֵי עוֹלָם וְיִבּוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד : מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד
 יְהוָה עֲזִוֹ וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר מְלִחְמָה : שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וּשְׂאוּ פְתִיחֵי
 עוֹלָם וְיִבּוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד : מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ
 הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה :

And in Your holy words it is written: “For the kingship is Adonoy’s, and He rules over nations.” And it is said: “Adonoy has begun His reign, He has clothed Himself in majesty; Adonoy has clothed Himself, He has girded Himself with strength. He has also firmly established the world so that it cannot be moved.” And it is said: “Lift up your heads,—gates, and be uplifted entranceways to eternity, so that the King of Glory may enter. Who is this King of Glory? Adonoy, strong and mighty; Adonoy, the Mighty One in battle. Lift up your heads,—gates, and lift up entranceways to eternity, so that the King of Glory may enter. Who is He, this King of Glory? Adonoy Tzevaos, He is the King of Glory, forever.”

Some of the themes of Malchuyot:

- *Sublime majesty*
- *Distant grandeur*
- *Exalted greatness of the Master of the Universe*
- *God is transcendent; the created is subordinate to the Creator*
- *Man recognizes God and stands in judgment before Him*
- *Man is accountable for all of his actions and misdeeds.*

Source 5: Bava Kamma 50a

תהלים נ, ג וסביביו נשערה מאד מלמד שהקדוש ברוך הוא מדקדק עם סביביו אפילו כחוט השערה ר' נחוניא אמר מהכא **תהלים פט, ח** אל נערץ בסוד קדושים רבה ונורא על כל סביביו

“**And around Him it storms [nisara] mightily**” ([Psalms 50:3](#)). This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is scrupulous with those around Him, i.e., the righteous, even to the extent of a hairsbreadth [*hasa'ara*], so that even minor transgressions elicit a severe punishment. **Rabbi Neḥunya says:** The same idea may be learned from here, in the following verse: “**A God dreaded in the great council of the holy ones, and feared by all those that surround Him**” ([Psalms 89:8](#)), indicating that God is most careful and exacting with those that surround Him, i.e., the righteous.

אמר ר' חנינא כל האומר הקב"ה ותרן הוא יותרו חייו שנאמר דברים לב הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט

Rabbi Ḥanina says: Anyone who states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is forgiving [*vateran*] of transgressions, his life will be relinquished [*yivatru*], as it is stated: “**The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice**” ([Deuteronomy 32:4](#)).

Source 6: Seeing Noah in the context of the first half of the Zichronot bracha in Musaf

אתה זוכר מעשה עולם ופוקד כל יצורי קדם. לפניך נגלו כל תעלומות והמון נסתרות שמבראשית. כי אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך. ואין נסתר מנגד עיניך: אתה זוכר את כל המפעל. וגם כלהיצור לא נכחד ממך. הכל גלוי וידוע לפניך יהוה אלהינו. צופה ומביט עד סוף כל הדורות. כי תביא חק זכרון להפקד כל רוח ונפש. להזכר מעשים רבים והמון בריות לאין תכלית. מראשית פזאת הודעת. ומלפנים אותה גלית. זה היום תחלת מעשיך זכרון ליום ראשון. כי חק לישראל הוא משפט לאלהי יעקב: ועל המדינות בו יאמר אי זו לחרב. ואי זו לשלום. אי זו לרעב. ואי זו לשבע. ובריות בו יפקדו. להזכירם לחיים ולמות: מי לא נפקד כהיום הזה. כי זכר כל היצור לפניך בא. מעשה איש ופקדתו. ועלילות מצעדי גבר. מחשבות אדם ותחבולותיו ויצרי מעללי איש: אשרי איש שלא שפחך. ובן אדם יתאמץ בדך. כי דורשיך לעולם לא יכשלו. ולא יכלמו לגצח כל החוסים בדך: כי זכר כל המעשים לפניך בא ואתה דורש מעשה כלם: וגם את נח באהבה זכרת. ותפקדהו בדבר ישועה ורחמים בהביאך את מי המבול לשחת כל בשר מפני רע מעלליהם. על פן זכרונו בא לפניך יהוה אלהינו להרבות זרעו בעפרות תבל. וצאצאיו כחול היס. כפתוב בתורתך ויזכר אלהים את נח ואת כל החיה ואת כל הבהמה אשר אתו בתבה ויעבר אלהים רוח על הארץ וישפו המים: ונאמר וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכר אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב: ונאמר וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב ואף את בריתי יצחק ונאמר וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם וזכרתי יעקוב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם:

You remember the dealings of [men in] today's world, and You [also] consider the behavior of all those who lived in earlier times. In Your Presence are revealed all hidden things and the multitude of secrets from the beginning of creation; for there is no forgetfulness before the throne of Your Glory, and there is nothing hidden from Your eyes. You remember all that has been done, and even all that which is formed is not concealed from You. All is revealed and known before You Adonoy, our God Who observes and looks until the end of all generations. For You set an appointed time of remembrance, to consider every soul and being; to cause numerous deeds to be remembered and the multitude of creatures without end. From the beginning of creation, You have made this known, and from before time You have revealed it. This day [Rosh Hashana] is the beginning of Your work a memorial of the first day. For it is a statute for Yisrael a [day of] judgment of the God of Yaakov. And over countries [judgment] is pronounced, which of them is destined for the sword [war] and which for peace, which for famine and which for abundance. And on it, creatures are brought to mind, to be remembered for life or for death. Who is not considered on this day? For the remembrance of all that is formed comes before You: the dealings of man, and the decree of his fate, and the misdeeds of man's actions, the thoughts of man and his schemes, and the motives for the deeds of man. Fortunate is the man who does not forget You, the son of man who gains strength in You. For those who seek You will never stumble, and never will they be disgraced— all who trust in You. For the remembrance of all their deeds come before You, and You examine the deeds of all

of them. And Noah, too, was lovingly remembered as You redeemed him with a proclamation of mercy and redemption when you brought the flood waters to destroy all flesh because of their evil deeds. Therefore did his memory appear before You, Hashem our God, to increase his progeny as the dust of the earth and his descendants as the sand of the sea, as is written, “And God remembered Noah and all of the animals and the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God sent a wind on the land and the waters receded.”

What shift do we see here in the text of the Zichronot?

Source 7 : Machzor of Rosh Hashana: From the transition between the first to the second half of the Zichronot:

וְעַל יְדֵי עֲבָדֶיךָ הַנְּבִיאִים כְּתוּב לֵאמֹר : הַלֵּךְ וּקְרֵאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ אֲהַבֵת כְּלוּלְתֵיךְ לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרֵי בְּמִדְבָר בְּאַרְץ לֹא זְרוּעָה : וְנֹאמַר וְזַכַרְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִוְתְךָ בִּימֵי נְעוּרַיִךְ וְהַקִּימוֹתֵי לְךָ בְּרִית עוֹלָם : וְנֹאמַר הֲבֹ יִקִּיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יֵלֵד שְׁעָשׂוּעִים כִּי מִדֵּי דְבָרֵי בּוֹ זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד עַל כֵּן הֵמוּ מְעַי לֹא רַחֵם אֲרַחֲמֶנּוּ נָאִם יְהוָה :

And by the hand of Your servants, the Prophets it is written: “Go and proclaim it in the ears of Yerushalayim, saying: thus said Adonoy, I remembered for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, how you followed Me into the wilderness, in a land that was not cultivated.” And it is said: “I will remember My covenant [which I made] with you in the days of your youth, and I will fulfill it for you as an everlasting covenant.” And it is said: “Is Ephraim not My precious son, is he not a child of delight? For whenever I speak of him, I recall him even more; Therefore, My innermost being is aroused for him, I will surely have compassion on him, says Adonoy.”

Source 8: Rav Lichtenstein, referring to Malchuyot and the first half of Zichronot:

Such a world, however, is not without its own problems. It is awe-inspiring, overwhelming, majestic, and absolute – but precious little room is left in such a world for the concept of *teshuva*. If exact justice must always be meted out, if every sin triggers a penalty, if there is a price tag for each and every human act, whence repentance?! The exacting standards of God’s attribute of Truth cannot and will not allow Him to overlook, forget, forgive, or understand any error or transgression, essentially eliminating the option of repentance and atonement.

If Truth and Justice are only compatible with adherence to a policy of strict accountability, *teshuva* must be an act of divine grace (*chesed*), which overrides the concept of accountability. Put slightly differently, *teshuva* is due to *Middat Ha-Rachamim* (the attribute of Mercy) and stands in paradoxical opposition to

the inner logic of natural law and the standards of justice required by *Middat Ha-Din* (the attribute of Justice).

Source 9: Jerusalem Talmud Makkot 2:6

אמר רבי פינחס תהילים כ"ה:ח' טוב וישר למה הוא טוב שהוא ישר ולמה הוא ישר שהוא טוב על כן יורה חטאים בדרך שמורה דרך תשובה. שאלו לחכמה חוטא מהו עונשו אמרו להם חטאים תרדף רעה שאלו לנבואה חוטא מהו עונשו אמרה להן הנפש החוטאת היא תמות שאלו לקודשא בריך הוא חוטא מהו עונשו אמר להן יעשו תשובה ויתכפר לו. היינו דכתיב על כן יורה חטאים בדרך יורה לחטאים דרך לעשות תשובה

Wisdom was asked: What is the sinner's punishment?

Wisdom answered: "Evil shall pursue sinners."

Prophecy was asked: What is the sinner's punishment?

Prophecy replied: "The soul that sins shall die."

God was asked: What is the sinner's punishment?

He responded: Let him do *teshuva* and he will be forgiven.

Source 10: Bamidbar Rabba 19:33

"Then Israel sang" (*Bamidbar* 21:17): This is one of the three things that Moshe told God and He responded, "You have taught Me."

[In the first instance,] Moshe said to Him: Master of the universe! How will Israel know what they have done? Were they not raised in Egypt, a land in which all of its citizens are idol worshippers? And did You not give the Torah to me and not to them, and they even stood at a remote distance at the time while I approached you, as is written, "And the people stood at a distance" (*Shemot* 20:17); "And to Moshe, God called out and told him to go up the mountain to meet Him" (*Shemot* 24:1). Moreover, when You gave them the Ten Commandments, You did not address Yourself to them, but to me; You did not say, "I am Hashem your [plural] God (*E-loheikhem*)" but rather "I am Hashem your [singular] God (*E-lohekha*)."
Perhaps, however, I am sinning [by advising God]? God responded to Moshe: By your life, you have spoken well; you have taught Me. From now on, I will address the whole people...

The second instance was when God proclaimed that He will "visit the sins of the fathers on the sons." Said Moshe: There are many righteous people whose parents are evildoers; will they pay for their parents' sins? Avraham was the son Terach, Chizkiyahu was the son of Achaz, and Yoshiyahu was the son of Ammon; is it proper that they should pay for the deeds of their sinning fathers? God replied: You have taught Me. I shall nullify

My policy and adopt yours. Henceforth, “The fathers will not die for the sins of their sons and the sons will not die for their father’s transgressions” (*Devarim* 24:16). Moreover, I will register it on your name, as stated in the verse, “The sons of the assassins were not executed, as is stated in the Torah of Moshe, the man of God, that each person shall die only for his sins” (II *Melakhim* 14:6).

The third instance was when God told him to go to war with Sichon and to wage a campaign against him, even if Sichon did not provoke the Israelites, as the verse states, “Cross the Arnon River and engage Sichon” (*Devarim* 2:24). Yet Moshe did not do so; the verse tells us, “I sent envoys to Sichon” (*ibid.* 26). God said to him: By your life, I will nullify My words and fulfill yours, as it says, “When you approach a city to battle against it, extend an offer of peace” (*Devarim* 20:10).

Source 10a: Bereishit 6:8

אַלֶּה תוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלְּךְ־נֹחַ:

This is the line of Noah. Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God.

10b) Rashi:

בְּדוֹרוֹתָיו. יָשָׁב מֵרַבּוֹתֵינוּ דוֹרָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ לְשִׁבְחָהּ, כָּל שָׂכָן אֵלָיו הָיָה בְּדוֹר צַדִּיקִים הָיָה צַדִּיק יוֹתֵר; וַיֵּשׁ שְׂדוֹרָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ לְגַנְאֵי, לְפִי דוֹרוֹ הָיָה צַדִּיק וְאֵלָיו הָיָה בְּדוֹרוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם לֹא הָיָה נֶחְשָׁב לְכֻלּוֹם (סנה' ק"ח):

בְּדוֹרוֹתָיו IN HIS GENERATIONS — Some of our Rabbis explain it (this word) to his credit: he was righteous even in his generation; it follows that had he lived in a generation of righteous people he would have been even more righteous owing to the force of good example. Others, however, explain it to his discredit: in comparison with his own generation he was accounted righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Abraham he would have been accounted as of no importance (cf. Sanhedrin 108a).

Source 11a): Bereishit 7:7

וַיָּבֵא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי־בָנָיו אֵתוֹ אֶל־הַתֵּבָה מִפְּנֵי מַי הַמַּבּוּל:

Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the Flood.

11b)

מפני מי המבול. אף נח מקטני אַמְנָה הָיָה, מֵאֲמִין וְאִינוּ מֵאֲמִין
שְׂיָבֵא הַמַּבּוּל, וְלֹא נִכְנָס לַתֵּבָה עַד שֶׁדַּחְקוּהוּ הַמַּיִם :

BECAUSE OF THE WATERS OF THE FLOOD — מפני מי המבול (מפני properly means “from before”) — Noah, also, was of those people who are wanting in faith: he believed and he did not believe that the Flood would come, and he would not enter the Ark until the waters forced him to do so ([Genesis Rabbah 32:6](#)).

Source 12: Zohar Hashmatot – Ch. 254

”מה השיב הקב”ה לנח כשיצא מן התיבה וראה את העולם חרב והתחיל לבכות לפניו, ואמר: רבונו של עולם נקראת רחום היה לך לרחם על בריותיך!

השיבו הקב”ה ואמר רעיא שטיא השתא אמרת דא? למה לא אמרת כך בשעתא דאמרית לך 'כי אותך ראיתי צדיק לפניי וגוי' ואח”כ 'הנני מביא את המבול מיס'י ואח”כ 'עשה לך תיבת עצי גופר' כל האי אתעכבית ואמרית לך בגין דתבעי רחמין על עלמא. ומכדין שמעתא דתשתזיב בתיבותא לא עאל בלבך למבעי רחמין על ישובא דעלמא ועבדת תיבותא ואשתזיבת וכען דאתאביד עלמא פתחת פומך למללא קדמי בעיין ותחנונים?

What did God answer Noah when he left the Ark and saw the world destroyed? He [Noah] began to cry before God and he said, "Master of the universe, You are called compassionate. You should have been compassionate for Your creation." God responded and said, "You are a foolish shepherd. Now you say this?! Why did you not say this at the time I told you that I saw that you were righteous among your generation, or afterward when I said that I will bring a flood upon the people, or afterward when I said to build an ark? I constantly delayed and I said, 'When is he [Noah] going to ask for compassion for the world?' ... And now that the world is destroyed, you open your mouth, to cry in front of me, and to ask for supplication?"

אמר רבי יוחנן בא וראה מה בין צדיקים שהיו להם לישראל אחר נח ובין נח. נח לא הגן על דורו ולא התפלל עליהם כאברהם, דכיון דאמר קב”ה לאברהם 'זעקת סדום ועמורה כי רבה' מיד 'ויגש אברהם ויאמר' וגו' והרבה תחנונים לפני הקב”ה

אח”כ בא משה והתפלל והגין על דורו כיון שאמר הקב”ה 'סרו מהר מן הדרך' מיד עמד משה בתפלה 'ויחל משה' וגו', רבנן אמרי לא הניח משה

להקב"ה עד שנתן נפשו עליהם מן העולם הזה ומן העולם הבא דכתיב
(שם) 'ואם אין מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת .'

Rabbi Yochanan said, "Come and see the difference between the righteous among the Jews after Noah, and Noah. Noah did not defend his generation, nor did he pray for them, as Abraham did. When God told Abraham that [he would destroy] Sodom and Gomorrah ... immediately Abraham began to pray in front of God until he asked of God if ten good people were found, would God forgive the entire city because of them ... Some time later, Moses came, and when God said to him, "They have turned aside quickly from the way in which I commanded them," immediately, Moshe stood and prayed ... It is said that Moses was willing to give his soul for the people in both this world and the next ...

Source 13: Bereishit

וַיְהִי כִּי־הִחֵל הָאָדָם לָרֹב עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּבָנוֹת יִלְדוּ לָהֶם :

When men began to increase on earth and daughters were
born to them,

וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הָיָה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל
אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ :

the divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men
were and took wives from among those that pleased them.—

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא־יָדוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשַׁגְם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה
וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה :

The LORD said, "My breath shall not abide in man forever,
since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one
hundred and twenty years."—

הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵיכֶן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
אֶל־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וַיִּלְדוּ לָהֶם הַמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם : (פ)

It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on
earth—when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters

of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown.

וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וְכָל־יִצְרָל מִחַשְׁבֹּת לְבָבוֹ רַק רָע כָּל־הַיּוֹם :

The LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time.

וַיִּנְחַם יְהוָה כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֶל־לְבוֹ :

And the LORD regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲמַחֶה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נַחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתָם :

The LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created—men together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them."

וַנֹּחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה : (פ)

But Noah found favor with the LORD

Source 14: Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein:

The Torah addresses this point at the conclusion of *Parashat Bereishit* in the enigmatic story of the "Bnei Ha-Elohim" (sons of the gods/powerful) found in the opening verses of chapter 6. Who exactly the *Bnei Ha-Elohim* were and what precisely they did is highly unclear, and differing suggestions have been advanced by the various commentators. **One thing, however, is abundantly clear – we are not talking about mere mortals, but about larger-than-life figures. Whether intended literally or not, the vocabulary employed here denotes a sense of mastery or control that these figures maintained over ordinary humans, or even the entire cosmos. It is theirs to master and control, and they bestride it accordingly. Tragically, however, they do not subordinate these powers to bring about the greater glory of God, but rather use it to subdue other humans and to exalt themselves as self-appointed gods. Although they have much more spiritual potential than ordinary, mortal Noah, the dangers of perversion and corruption are also much greater.**

Thus, at the conclusion of *Parashat Bereishit*, as the creation story reaches its tragic denouement, the Torah presents to us with a study in contrasts; there are the fallen, heroic "Bnei Ha-Elohim," who have degenerated into moral and sexual depravity, and there is the plainer and simpler, un-heroic Noah, who has managed to maintain his integrity and honesty. These are the two alternatives – the heroic and the non-heroic – representing the two totally divergent paths that the course of creation may follow, **and**

it is between these two options that the Torah chooses loudly and clearly, preferring Noah's well-intentioned stability and commitment, with its attendant limitations and inevitable failures, over the competing alternative, whose failure is evident. The Torah's statement that Noah found favor in God's eyes, unlike his more heroic contemporaries, is not only a statement regarding Noah the son of Lamech as an individual. It is a choice of the model that Noah personifies as the better paradigm for a human world.

Such a paradigm presumes love, mercy and compassion, for without them, man's sins will always bring about his downfall at the bar of absolute justice. Although there is undoubtedly a price to be paid for forsaking the original model of absolute truth, Noah has proved that his unassuming obedience and the corresponding adoption of a more lenient approach will be the most productive and fruitful direction to adopt. The *Bnei Ha-Elohim* are unaware of the significance of their mortality, and they therefore sin;¹ Noah, who is all too aware of his material existence, attempts to steer clear from challenging God or disregarding natural law, although we are well aware that he will inevitably commit many infractions within the system.

God's choice of Noah and His loving redemption of him extend to us the hope that we, too, may be redeemed and forgiven on the Day of Judgment, as *teshuvah* has been introduced into the natural system of the created world as a necessary element. Noah served as the vehicle through whom the original transition from the stern, absolute standard was modified to a more lenient one. It is therefore to his saga that we turn every Rosh Ha-Shana to request and implore God that He do the same for us on the day that creation is celebrated. The ability and necessity to forgive Man for his inevitable sins and misdemeanors is rooted in the very nature of creation since the time of Noah,² the human *tzaddik*.³

Source 15: Commentaries on B'nai HaElohim

בני האלהים בני השרים והשופטים לשון רש"י וכך הוא בבראשית רבה (כו ה) אם כן יספר הכתוב כי הדיינים אשר להם לעשות המשפט בניהם עושים החמס בגלוי ואין מונע אותם .

ספרי בהעלותך י"א ב:

ויראו בני האלוהים... מה היו בני הדיינים עושים? היו אוחזים נשים מן השוק ומענים אותם. אם כך היו בני הדיינים עושים, קל וחמר לשאר הדיוטין.

רד"ק:

ויראו בני האלוהים: בני השופטים והגדולים ומנהיגי המדינות, כי הם נקראו אלוהים, כמו (שמות כ"ב) "אלוהים לא תקלל" והדומים לו...

ד"ה את בנות האדם: בנות המון האדם החלושים, שלא היה להם כח לעמוד כנגדם; וכאשר היו רואים בני הגדולים בנות העניים שהיו טובות, רצוני לומר, יפות תואר ומראה, היו עושקים ולוקחים איזה שהם טובות מכל האנשים ואותן שישרו בעיניהם, הן פנויות או נשואות לבעל, כי מי שהיה גדול מחברו עושה את חברו ואין מציל מידם; ו"אדם" נאמר על הפחותים והחלושים, שנאמר (תהלים מ"ט): "גם בני אדם גם בני איש", "בני אדם" – הפחותים, "בני איש" – הגדולים.