

Who Is There When the Battle Ends?

Parshas Noach • Peace of Mind Shabbos

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Westmount Shul & Learning Centre

Welcome Our Guests

WORDS FOR OUR GUESTS

אֲרוֹחֵינוּ הַיְקָרִים, חֲבִילֵי צֶה"ל, זָכִינוּ לְאַרְחֵ אֶתְכֶם הַשָּׁבוּעַ בְּקֶהֱלָה שְׁלֵנוּ. תּוֹדָה עַל מֶה שְׁעָשִׂיתֶם לְמַעַן עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל. אַתֶּם רְחוּקִים מִהַבֵּית, אָבֵל כָּאֵן אַתֶּם בְּתוֹךְ מִשְׁפָּחָה. אֲנִחנוּ שְׂמֵחִים שְׂאִתֶּם אִתָּנוּ בַּשַּׁבָּת הַזֹּאת.

English translation

Our dear guests, soldiers of the IDF: we have been privileged to host you in our community this week. Thank you for what you have done for the Jewish people. You are far from home, but here you are among family. We are happy that you are with us this Shabbos.

Two Men After the Battle

I want to place two great figures from the beginning of the Torah alongside one another this morning: Noach and Avraham Avinu.

Their experiences were very different. Noach did not go out with an army. He entered an ark while the world around him was destroyed. Avraham did go into battle, pursuing the kings who had taken his nephew Lot captive. But each man faced a struggle of enormous proportions, and each had to live with what came afterward.

We often concentrate on how a person gets through the danger itself. Will Noach survive the Flood? Will Avraham rescue Lot? The Torah tells us that both succeed. But what happens afterward? What does a person find when he steps out of the ark or returns from the battlefield?

Before we follow those stories, let us understand the program that has brought our guests here. Peace of Mind describes a nine-month program led by specially trained therapists from METIV, the Israel Psychotrauma Centre. It gives veterans time to work through their combat experiences individually and together. This

overseas week is part of that longer process. The host community helps provide what the organization calls a “safe, quiet and supportive environment,” away from the pressures of daily life in Israel. Peace of Mind also emphasizes the importance of the “gratitude and warmth” that veterans receive from Jewish communities abroad.

That helps us understand why this week matters. After giving so much of themselves, those who served deserve time, attention, and a place where their experiences can be heard with respect. Taking that opportunity is something our community should honour.

Noach Comes Out of the Ark

Noach was a righteous man. For years he obeyed Hashem in a world that had gone terribly wrong. He built the ark, brought his family and the animals inside, and endured the Flood. When he finally emerged, he built an altar to Hashem.

But emerging from the ark was not the same as returning to the world he remembered. His wife and children were with him, but everyone else he had known was gone. The Torah does not tell us exactly what he felt. Rashi does, however, tell us that Noach was afraid to bring children into the world. What if another Flood came? Why begin a new life if it, too, might be destroyed?

Hashem answers that fear. He promises never again to destroy the world with a Flood. He establishes a covenant and gives the rainbow as its sign.

Now listen for Noach’s response. The Torah records none.

Perhaps Noach said things the Torah has not preserved for us. We cannot know. But the portrait it gives us is striking: Noach builds, obeys, survives—and we hear no words from him about the concern that Rashi describes.

Then comes the vineyard. Noach plants it, drinks from its wine, and becomes drunk. Rashi criticizes his choice to make a vineyard his first planting. We should not pretend that the Torah gives us a clinical explanation of his drinking. It does not. But it does leave us with a searching question: what helps a person face what comes afterward, rather than simply seek a way to put it out of mind?

Shem and Yefes then give us a beautiful picture of care. They cover their father without looking at him. They protect his dignity. That, too, is something the Torah wants us to notice.

Avraham Returns from Battle

Now consider Avraham. Lot has been taken captive. Avraham gathers the men of his household, pursues the kings, fights, and brings back Lot and the other captives. It is an extraordinary victory. What happens when he returns?

Malki-Tzedek, king of Shalem, brings out bread and wine. Rashi explains that this is what one gives people wearied by battle.

Wine appears in both stories. Noach goes to his vineyard. Avraham returns from war, and another person comes out to meet him with bread and wine. The Torah does not tell us that Avraham drank it. It tells us that someone saw him returning and offered him care.

Malki-Tzedek could not change what had happened in the battle. But he could come out to greet the man who had returned. He could offer food and welcome.

Then Hashem speaks to Avraham:

אַל תִּירָא אֲבְרָם אֲנִי מִגֵּן לָךְ.

Do not fear, Avram; I am your shield.

Why does a victorious man need to hear “Do not fear”? Rashi tells us that Avraham was troubled after the battle. Victory had not made every concern disappear.

And now listen to Avraham’s response: Avraham speaks.

“What can You give me when I remain childless?” He brings the question that is actually on his mind before Hashem. What future does he have if he has no child? Hashem answers him and tells him to look at the stars.

Then Hashem promises him the land, and Avraham asks again: “How shall I know that I will inherit it?” The conversation continues. Speaking did not make every difficulty disappear. He would still wait years for a child. But he had brought his question into a relationship.

A Welcome and Someone Who Listens

The Torah gives us two very different portraits of what comes afterward. In Avraham’s story, notice the welcome he receives and the questions he is able to express.

Avraham was received when he came back. And Avraham spoke.

Noach certainly had a family. Shem and Yefes showed him tender care. But the Torah does not show us someone receiving him after the Flood as Malki-Tzedek

receives Avraham after battle. Nor does it record a conversation in which he gives his concern words.

Our Sages express something related in their reading of a verse in Mishlei: when worry sits in a person's heart, speak of it to others.

That does not mean that a person owes everyone his story. It means there is value in having someone with whom he can speak honestly—someone who listens and takes him seriously.

This is one point of connection with Peace of Mind. The program provides time and a facilitated setting in which those who served can reflect and speak with their group. The professional team guides that work. As hosts, we contribute welcome, friendship, and respect. What is shared in the group belongs to the people in that room.

Sometimes we imagine that strength means having no questions, or never needing to speak. But Avraham was a man of extraordinary strength, and he asked questions. His questions belong in the Torah's account of his greatness.

WORDS FOR OUR GUESTS

אַבְרָהָם חִזַּר מִן הַקָּרֶב, וּמִלְכִּי צֶדֶק יָצָא לִקְרֹאתוֹ עִם לֶחֶם וַיֵּין. אַבְרָהָם גַּם דִּבֶּר עַל מֶה שֶׁהִטְרִיד אוֹתוֹ. יֵשׁ עֵרָךְ בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁאֲפָשֶׁר לְדַבֵּר בּוֹ בְּכִנוּת, עִם אֲנָשִׁים שֶׁמְקַשְׁבִּים וּמְכַבְּדִים. אֲנִיחָנוּ מְקוֹמָם שֶׁהִרְגִּשְׁתֶּם הַשְׁבֹּעַ אֶת הָחֵם וְאֶת הַהֶעֱרָכָה שֶׁל הַקְהֵלָה שְׁלָנוּ.

English translation

Avraham returned from battle, and Malki-Tzedek came out to greet him with bread and wine. Avraham also spoke about what concerned him. There is value in a place where one can speak honestly, with people who listen and show respect. We hope you felt our community's warmth and appreciation this week.

The Torah Avraham Belonged To

There was another part of Avraham's life that our Sages ask us to see. The Gemara describes Avraham as someone who sat and learned Torah. It also identifies the men he took into battle as Torah scholars. In the picture our Sages give us, learning, companionship, and responsibility for others belonged to the same life.

The battle was not the whole of their identity. Avraham had people with whom he learned, questions he continued to ask, and a relationship with Hashem that continued through all those experiences.

That brings us to something precious about Torah. It gives us words with which to think about our lives: courage, responsibility, friendship, dignity, and the

questions we cannot easily answer. This morning, we have opened a passage about a man returning from battle and discovered that the Torah pays attention to the bread someone brings him and the questions he asks afterward.

These things matter to Hashem. They belong in our Torah.

Dovid HaMelech says:

תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ

The Torah of Hashem is whole, restoring the soul.

For a person who learns, Torah can be a source of steadiness, meaning, and closeness to Hashem. Its gift is more than distraction. We encounter something true that remains worth returning to, even while our questions remain.

Dovid also says:

לִּילִי תוֹרַתְךָ שִׁעְשָׁעִי אֲזֵ אֲבִדְתִּי בְּעָנִי

Had Your Torah not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

He does not say that the difficulties never happened. He tells us what sustained him within them. That is a testimony worth sharing. Our Torah belongs to every Jew, and its questions and wisdom are there for all of us to explore.

What We Have Shared This Week

This Shabbos comes near the end of a remarkable week for our community. Our guests arrived last Sunday night. Tomorrow they will depart. In between, we have had the privilege of opening our homes and sharing meals, conversation, and ordinary time together.

We thank Hashem for giving our community this opportunity. We thank the host families, the Peace of Mind team, and everyone who helped make this week possible.

I hope that in some small way we have been able to be like Malki-Tzedek: to come out to greet those who served, bring bread, offer a place at our tables, and express our gratitude through friendship.

And the friendship has gone both ways. We have gained from getting to know you. You have brought Israel into our homes through your presence and your conversations. The connection we feel to our people has become more personal this week.

For our congregation, that is a lesson to take beyond this visit. Appreciation should have a practical expression. Sometimes that expression is helping to make

a program like Peace of Mind possible. Sometimes it is a meal, an invitation, or the time to listen. We each have something we can contribute.

And to our guests: thank you for sharing this week with us. What you have done for our people matters deeply to us. So does the friendship we have begun.

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תודה שהייתם איתנו השבוע. אִנַּחְנוּ מַעֲרִיכִים אֶתְכֶם, וְשִׂמְחִים עַל הַקָּשָׁר שֶׁנוֹצֵר בֵּינֵנוּ.
שֶׁתְּחַזְרוּ הַבֵּיתָה לְשָׁלוֹם, וְשִׁיְהִי לָכֶם וּלְמִשְׁפּוּחֹתֵיכֶם בְּרִיאוֹת, שְׂמֵחָה וְשָׁלוֹם.

English translation

Thank you for being with us this week. We appreciate you and are happy about the connection that has grown between us. May you return home in peace, and may you and your families have health, happiness, and peace.

May Hashem protect you and all who defend our people. May He bless your homes, your families, your work, and the lives you are building. And may the friendship we shared this week continue long after this Shabbos is over.

Sources

Peace of Mind Canada: Our Mission, <https://www.pomcanada.com/our-mission>; homepage, <https://www.pomcanada.com/>. Program description checked October 8, 2026.

Bereishis 8:20; 9:1–23; Rashi to 9:9 and 9:20. Bereishis 14:13–18; Rashi to 14:18; Bereishis 15:1–18; Rashi to 15:1. Yoma 75a on Mishlei 12:25; Yoma 28b; Nedarim 32a. Tehillim 19:8 and 119:92.