

פרשת נח¹

It appears that the first time that we meet Noach, and explore his personality with the help of Rashi, that we meet an individual about whom the opinions are divided.

The opening verse of our Parsha indicates this sense.

The Torah writes (B'reishis Perek 6/Posuk 9):

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדַרְתּוֹ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים... לְקִיּוֹם הַתְּהֵלֵךְ נֹחַ:

These are the generations of Noach; Noach, a righteous man, pure in his generations; Noach walked with G-d.

It is safe to say that if the Torah would make such a statement regarding us, we would be most pleased. We would be delighted to have a little of the praise that was heaped upon Noach, certainly our joy would have no boundaries if all that was said about him would have been said about us.

However, the Torah is not writing testimonials about Noach. It wants to teach us about *Dor haMabul*, the generation of the flood and tell us of the constellation of personalities that were found then, that tenth generation of mankind.

And since the Torah has designated Noach as a Tzaddik, then the rules that apply to other righteous individuals seemingly apply to him as well.

Thus we read at the conclusion of Masseches Yevomos (121 b):

(תהילים נ/ג¹) וסביביו נשערה מאד, מלמד, שהקדוש ברוך הוא מדקדק עם סביביו כחוט השערה. ר' חנינא אמר, מהכא: (שם פט/ח) א...ל נערץ בסוד קדושים רבה ונורא על כל סביביו.

¹ The entire verse reads:

יְבֹא אֱלֹהִים... לְקִיּוֹנוֹ וְאֵל יִחַרֶשׂ אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תֹּאכַל וְסִבְיָיו נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד:
G-d, come and do not be silent [at the death of Your martyrs]; the fire before Him will consume and His surroundings are very stormy.

The *drash* of the verse is not so different than its *p'shat*. The *p'shat* is that נשערה means 'stormy'.

The Tanach uses two spellings for storm – one is with the letter ש, sin, and one is with the letter ס. (In Yona [Perek 1/Posuk 4], the Novi writes סער, with a *samech* and without a *heh* at the end, a form that is also found in many places in Tanach.)

The Posuk says, 'His surroundings are very stormy'. This teaches that Hashem pays particular attention to those who surround Him and judges them even by minutiae².

Rabi Chanina says we learn that principle from this verse: Hashem is feared [even] in the great council of His holy [angels]; He is fearful upon all that surrounds Him:

Thus, when we read Rashi, we are not surprised to find a critical opinion about the Noach based upon the fact that he is termed 'righteous and pure' in 'his generations'. If he was righteous and pure' what is the need to add בדורותיו, we are obviously discussing the period of his life, no other time.

Rashi writes:

בדורותיו - יש מרבותינו דורשים אותו לשבח, כל שכן שאלו היה בדור צדיקים היה צדיק יותר, ויש שדורשים אותו לגנאי, לפי דורו היה צדיק, ואלו היה בדורו של אברהם לא היה נחשב לכלום:

In his generations – there are some of our Rabbis who interpret this as being complimentary to Noach, implying that he certainly would have been more righteous if he would have lived in a generation of righteous people.

Others interpret it derogatorily – according to the level of his generation he was a *Tzaddik* – if he would have lived in the generation of Avraham he would not have been considered as anything special at all.

It might appear that the explanation of Rashi that follows immediately is taking sides in this dispute. He writes:

The drasha here talks about the 'fierceness' in which Hashem judges the righteous. Thus, 'stormy' can be easily understood in the context of the *drasha*.

² Literally – by the hair's thread.

את הא...לקים התהלך נח - ובאברהם הוא אומר (יז/א³) התהלך לפני, (כד/מ⁴) אשר התהלכתי לפניו, נח היה צריך סעד לתומכו, אבל אברהם היה מתחזק ומהלך בצדקו מאליו:

Noach walked with G-d – Regarding Avraham the Torah writes that Hashem said to him, “Walk before Me’ and Avraham said, ‘I have walked before Him’.

Noach required [Divine] help to support him. Avraham strengthened himself and went by the power of his own righteousness.

However, the conclusion that this second Rashi sides with the negative explanation in the earlier Rashi is incorrect.

The initial Rashi, giving us two perspectives regarding Noach, presents us with conjecture. Chazal wondered⁵ ‘what would Noach have been like had he lived in a different generation?’

Chazal were not questioning ‘where Noach was holding’ in this lifetime. His particular position in his lifetime was made clear by the second Rashi. Noach, with all of his righteousness and purity, did not match up to Avraham Ovinu.

³ The entire verse reads:

וְהָיָה אֲבְרָם בֶּן תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתִשְׁעֵי שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל אֲבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵי
וְהָיָה תָמִים:

Avram was ninety-nine years old and Hashem appeared to him and He said to him, ‘I am the Almighty G-d, walk before Me and be pure’.

⁴ The entire verse, when Avraham Ovinu instructs his servant Eliezer regarding a wife for Yitzchak, reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו ה' אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי לִפְנֵי יְשַׁלַּח מַלְאָכָו אֵתְךָ וְהִצְלִיחַ דְרָכְךָ וְלָקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתִּי
וּמִבֵּית אָבִי:

G-d before Whom I walked, will send His angels with you and bring your path success and you should take a wife for my son, from my family and from the household of my father.

⁵ I think that we would be hard-pressed to find similar examples of conjecture. After all, how could anyone estimate precisely the various influences that impact upon a person?

However, here, the Torah invites that conjecture by writing בדורותיו.

Avraham Ovinu found his inner strength to make his righteousness independent of constant Divine support. His righteousness was a spring well of inspiration.

Noach was not on such a level. He required a crutch to carry him through.

The question of Chazal was – ‘If Noach had lived in the same time as Avraham Ovinu – would he have been inspired by the atmosphere created by the super-righteous and would have taken that atmosphere as a means of raising himself to an even higher level or would the result have been the opposite?’

Perhaps, Noach had to be an antithesis to his environment. His level of righteousness was motivated by his opposition to his surroundings. He was repulsed by the civilization in which he found himself and reacted to it.

If Noach would have lived in the environment of Avraham Ovinu, he would have not had the same motivation and would not have been unique whatsoever.

These are the two sides that Rashi explains first. The actual assessment of what Noach was is contained in the second Rashi and thus there is no tension between them.

However this is not the first time we meet Noach.

Noach was already introduced to us at the conclusion of Parshas B’reishis. There, at the conclusion of the generations stemming from *Shes*, the son of Odom and Chava we are told the name of the child born to the second *Lemech*⁶ and far more than his name.

We read (B’reishis Perek 5/P’sukim 28-29):

וַיְחִי לְמַךְ שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בֶּן׃ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לְאמֹר זֶה יַנְחֵמֵנוּ
מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יְדֵינוּ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָה ה'׃

Lemech lived 182 years and gave birth to a son. He called his son’s name *Noach*, saying, ‘This one will comfort us from our deeds and from the sadness of your hands from the ground that Hashem cursed it.’

⁶ The Lemech named as a descendant of *Shes* was the son of *Mesushelach*. There was an earlier Lemech, the grandson of Kayin who killed Kayin, as we read earlier in the Parsha.

Since we can imagine that in every generation since the banishment from *Gan Eden* that everyone wished to see the end of the Divine curse that evidently plagued humanity for centuries, we must wonder what was unique about Noach that brought his father to give him a special name that the Torah saw fit to explain.

We are also told (Posuk 32):

וַיְהִי נֹחַ בֶּן חָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְּד נֹחַ אֶת שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יָפֶת׃

Noach was five hundred years old and Noach gave birth to Shem, to Chom and to Yefes.

Rashi notes that Noach was at a relatively advanced age, in comparison to his times, to have his first children. He explains:

בן חמש מאות שנה - אמר רבי יודן מה טעם כל הדורות הולידו למאה שנה וזה לחמש מאות, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אם רשעים הם יאבדו במים ורע לצדיק זה, ואם צדיקים הם אטריח עליו לעשות תיבות הרבה, כבש את מעיינו ולא הוליד עד שהיה בן חמש מאות שנה, כדי שלא יהא יפת הגדול שבבניו ראוי לעונשין לפני המבול דכתיב (ישעיה סה/כ⁷) כי הנער בן מאה שנה ימות, וראוי לעונש לעתיד, וכן לפני מתן תורה:

Five hundred years old – Rabi Yudin said, ‘What was the reason that those generations gave birth at a hundred years old and this person at 500? Hashem said, “If his children will be wicked, they will perish in the water [of the flood] and that will be bad for this righteous person. If they will be righteous, I will then burden Noach to build man arks [to house them all].”

Hashem closed Noach’s fertility and he did not give birth until he was 500 years old so that Yefes, the oldest of his sons, would not be of a punishable age at the flood, as it is written, ‘a lad one hundred years old will die’ and then be always eligible for punishment in the future.

This was the age of liability for punishment before the Torah was given.

⁷ The entire verse reads:

לֹא יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם עוֹד עוֹל יָמִים וְזָקֵן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמְלֵא אֶת יָמָיו כִּי הַנֶּעֱר בֶּן מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוּת וְהַחוּטָא בֶּן מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִקְלָל׃

There will no longer be from there a lad of [a life of] days [only] and an aged person who will not live out all of his days; because a lad of one hundred years will die and a sinner one-hundred years old [who does not get a punishment of death] will be cursed.

Thus, Hashem was 'looking out for' Noach far in advance, for many centuries, so as not to place emotional or physical burdens upon him.

Hashem arranged history that even if Noach's children would be wicked and should be condemned to perish with the rest of humanity, they would be spared.

How does Parshas B'reishis conclude? We read (Perek 6/Posuk 8):

וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה':

Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.

Does it not seem that this verse is superfluous? How else could we explain the fact that Noach was spared potential sorrow from his children and potential physical hardships if Noach did not find favor in G-d's eyes?

And, how do we explain this week's Parshas Noach in which Noach is told that he will be spared death by the flood and will be able to save himself and his family? Isn't that 'finding favor in the eyes of G-d'?

It appears that the portrait of Noach that the Torah presents to us is replete with paradoxical messages. And, finally, as the flood begins, we read in our Parsha (Perek 7/Posuk 7):

וַיָּבֹא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְנָשֵׁי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ אֶל הַתֵּבָה מִפְּנֵי מִי הַמַּבּוּל:

Noach and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him came into the ark because of the waters of the flood.

Rashi writes:

מפני מי המבול - אף נח מקטני אמנה היה, מאמין ואינו מאמין שיבא המבול ולא נכנס לתיבה עד שדחקהו המים:

Because of the waters of the flood – Even Noach was a person of little faith; he believed and he didn't believe that there would be a flood.

He only entered the ark when the waters forced into it.

And thus, even until the onset of the flood, the Torah presents us with a mixed picture of Noach.

And, subsequent to the flood, when we read of Noach's loss of self-control, our opinion of him may be lowered significantly.

We read there (Perek 9/P'sukim 20-21):

וַיְחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כַּרְם: וַיִּשְׁתַּ מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אָהֳלָה:

Noach, master of the land, was profaned and he planted a vineyard. He was revealed and he rolled around in his tent.

The infamous event that resulted from this intoxicated episode left an indelible mark upon the future generations of one part of Noach's family⁸.

But, even before we come to the post- diluvium period, there is sufficient information and counter-information to cause us much confusion.

Before we seek an approach to have a holistic understanding of Noach, let us take a look at his contemporary history to understand the milieu into which Noach was born.

One piece of evidence as to the nature of those times is the naming of Noach.

The Torah writes (B'reshis Perek 5/P'sukim 28-29):

וַיְחִי לִמֶּךָ שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וּמֵאֵת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְד בֶּן: וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה יִנְחֵמֵנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יְדֵינוּ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָה:

Lemech lived 182 years and he gave birth to a son. He called his name *Noach*, saying, 'This one will comfort⁹ us from our deeds and from the sadness of our hands that comes from the ground that He cursed.

⁸ When he became aware of the episode, Noach said (Perek 9/Posuk 25):

וַיֹּאמֶר אָרוּר כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאָחִיו:

He said, *K'na'an* [son of *Chom*] is cursed. He will be a slave of slaves to his brothers.

⁹ In fact there are numerous commentaries as to the meaning of the word *Noach* and if the word יִנְחֵמֵנוּ 'he will comfort us' stems from the word Noach. Or, as Rashi explains, the word implies יִנַּח, "He will relieve us from our troubles." Perhaps, explains *Netziv*, it means 'he will give us rest' - *menuchah*.

For what is *Lemech* hoping?

Rashi, following the rendition of *Targum Yonoson ben Uziel* writes:

זה ינחמנו - עד שלא בא נח לא היה להם כלי מחרישה והוא הכין להם, והיתה הארץ מוציאה קוצים ודרדרים כשזורעים חטים, מקללתו של אדם הראשון, ובימי נח נחה...

This one will comfort us – Until Noach came into the world there were no plows and he prepared one for them¹⁰. [Until Noach's time] the land produced thorns and thistles when they planted wheat; this stemmed from the curse that was placed upon *Odom HoRishon* and in the time of Noach the curse subsided.

But not only on earth was there sadness. In heaven as well there was dissatisfaction.

The Torah writes (Perek 6/Posuk 3):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לֹא יֵדוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׂגָם הוּא בָּשָׂר וְהָיָה יָמָיו מָאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה:

See the introduction of Netziv to the Torah in which he writes that there a number of words in which the root, *shoresh*, is a combination of multiple words and thus this hybrid word has a unique and special meaning.

Perhaps, the word *Noach* is such a word.

¹⁰ The Rosh brings an extraordinary *Masorah* from Rabi Yehuda HeChosid [one of the Ba'alei Tosfos and author of *Sefer HaChasidim*]:

נמצא בשם רבי יהודה החסיד ז"ל שקודם שנולד נח לא היה להם פיסוק אצבעות והיו חורשים בידיהם ונח נולד בחילוק אצבעות ולא היה בו כח לחרוש בידיו וזה שאמרו חז"ל מחרישות תקן להם:

It is found in the name of Rabi Yehuda HeChosid Z"l that before Noach was born people did not have separations between their fingers [paw-like?] and they would plow the ground for planting with their 'hands'. Noach was born with separated fingers [as we have] and he was not able to plow with *his* hands. That is what Chazal said, 'He prepared plows for them'.

Torah Sheleima here brings a Midrash which is similar to that which is brought in the name of Rabi Yehuda Hechosid, but with a different emphasis.

See his lengthy footnote 79 there.

¹¹Hashem said, 'I will not forever let My Spirit be upset forever; man does not listen to Me even though he is only flesh; I will give mankind 120 years more.

We read a few verses later (Posuk 6):

וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' כִּי עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֵל לְבוֹ:

Hashem regretted that He made Man; He was saddened by Man in His heart.

Both Mankind and (*l'havdil*) HaKodosh Boruch Hu were disturbed. Lemech talked about *עצבון ידינו*, the sorrow that they had from their hard labor and Hashem spoke about sadness of the heart *ויתעצב*.

The portrait is not pretty. There was dissatisfaction on heaven and on earth that those on earth were the ones who bore responsibility.

It is into that atmosphere that Noach was born, bearing great expectation.

Were those expectations met on earth and in heaven?

We read in Masseches Ovos (Perek 5/Mishnah 2):

עשרה דורות מאדם עד נח להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין
ובאין עד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול

There were ten generations from Odom until Noach to inform us the greatness of is the forbearance of G-d. The generations were increasingly angering Hashem until He [finally] brought the flood upon them.

Where is Noach in this Mishnah? He seems to be merely a 'placeholder'. What is his significance other than being a distant descendant of Odom HoRishon, born at a particular time period.

This section of Mishnah stands in stark contrast to its second segment:

¹¹ This rendition is a paraphrase based on Rashi's commentary.

עשרה דורות מנח עד אברהם להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין
ובאין עד שבא אברהם וקבל עליו שכר כולם:

There were ten generations from Noach to Avraham to inform us of the greatness of the forbearance of Hashem. All the generations were increasingly angering Him until Avraham came and received the reward of them all.

Rashi's commentary here is most instructive:

שכר כולם...השכר שהיה ראוי לכולם אילו חזרו בתשובה קבל אברהם אבינו על עצמו. ובנח
לא נאמר עד שבא נח וקבל עליו שכר כולם לפי שלא היה צדיק כל כך שנאמר בו צדיק תמים
היה בדורותיו ולא בדורות אחרות...

The reward of all of them – the reward that was appropriate for all of them to receive if they would have repented. That is what Avraham received.

Regarding Noach it does not say that he received the reward of all of them because he was not so righteous [as Avraham]. That is why it says, 'he was righteous and pure in his generations', implying but not in other generations¹².

And this Mishnah may be our key to get a grasp on the person Noach, who he was and what his role was as humanity approached 2000 years of existence¹³.

¹² Rashi continues and brings the alternative opinion which he wrote first in his commentary on Chumash – that if Noach had lived in more righteous times he would have been ever more righteous.

Rashi writes that he prefers this second explanation. However, I do not understand how that explains the lack of reward for Noach. Was he to blame that Hashem brought him to life in a time that was detrimental for his personal development?

However, the answer must be as we wrote that Noach reached a certain standard and based on that standard he received his due. The rest, regarding what he would have been in other generations is conjecture – a conjecture validated by the Torah, but conjecture nonetheless.

¹³ The flood took place in the year 1656.

With that Mishnah in hand we can now view what I think is the key verse in the Chumash, as explained by Seforno¹⁴, regarding Noach¹⁵.

We read the final verse of Parshas B'reishis (Perek /Posuk 8):

וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה':

Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.

The context of the Posuk is understood from the one that preceded it. That Posuk reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֲמַחֶה אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד בְּהֵמָה עַד רֶמֶשׁ
וְעַד עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נַחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתָם:

Hashem said, 'I will wipe our Man, whom I created, from the face of the ground, from man to animal to creeping creatures to the fowl of the sky; I regret that I made them!

This is the context in which we read that Noach found favour in G-d's eyes.

However, we are wondrous. Noach was a *Tzaddik* and pure. The Torah testifies to that matter.

Chein means that which is given for free. Rashi writes that in Sefer D'vorim when Moshe Rabbenu prays to HaKodosh Boruch Hu using the term ואתחנן, a word that has the same root as *chein* in our verse.

Rashi writes there (Perek 4/Posuk):

ואתחנן - אין חנון בכל מקום אלא לשון מתנת חנם:

¹⁴ In the next pages we will review a number of the commentaries that Seforno gives us in regards to Noach. In addition to what I will explain, I have drawn on the supra-commentary of Rav Yehudah Copperman ZT"L.

¹⁵ Certainly there are multiple ways to approach the question of 'who was Noach' and what was his basic nature. We choose here to focus on the approach of *Seforno*. There are other approaches as well.

Voeshanan – *Chanun* always means an expression of receiving an undeserved gift.

Now, there in Parshas Voeshanan, we praise Moshe Rabbenu who was certainly deserving, but presented himself as undeserving because *he* chose to use the expression of *voeshanan*.

Here, however, regarding Noach, it is the Torah's narrative telling us the objective view of what occurred.

As it were, Hashem decided to do Noach a favor!

What was that favor?

Seforno writes here:

ונח מצא חן. להציל גם בניו ובנותיו, לא מפני שהיה ראוי לכך, אבל על צד חנינה זכה
הקל יתברך לזה:

Noach found favor – To save his sons and daughters. [Hashem did not save his sons and daughters] because Noach was deserving of that. Rather, Hashem did it as favor which he was privileged to receive.

Here, too, we find a distinction between Noach and Avraham Ovinu.

When the angel saves Lot from the destruction of Sedom we read (B'reishis Perek 19/Posuk 17):

וַיְהִי כְּהוֹצִיאֵם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְאָךְ עַל נַפְשָׁךְ אֵל תִּבְיֹט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַל תִּעַמַּד בְּכָל
הַכְּפָר הַהָרָה הַמַּלְאָךְ פֶּן תִּסָּפֶה:

When the angel took them to the outside he said, 'Escape for your life; do not look in back of you and do not stand in any of the square; flee to the mountain lest you be killed.

Rashi writes:

אל תביט אחריך - אתה הרשעת עמהם, ובזכות אברהם אתה ניצול, אינך כדאי
לראות בפורענותם ואתה ניצול:

Do not look in back of you – you acted evilly with them. It is with the merit of Avraham that you are being saved; you do not deserve to see them being punished while you are being saved.

Not only did Avraham Ovinu *deserved* to be saved on his own merit, but his merit was sufficient to save those beyond his immediate family –Lot.

Noach, on the other hand, had sufficient merit to save himself, but not enough merit to save his children¹⁶.

Is the metric by which HaKodosh Boruch Hu metes out merit something that we can understand or is such knowledge beyond human ability?

Seforno says that there is a pattern through which we can identify the extent of merit.

Seforno tells us that the Torah itself has revealed the standard to us. We read in Sefer Yechezkel (Perek 14/P'sukim 12-14):

וְיִהְיֶה דְבַר ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: בֶּן אָדָם אֲרָץ כִּי תַחֲטָא לִי לְמַעַל מֵעַל וְנָטִיתִי יָדִי עָלֶיהָ וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי
לָהּ מִטָּה לָחֶם וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי בָּהּ רָעַב וְהִכְרַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָּה: וְהָיוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָאָנָשִׁים
הָאֵלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ נֹחַ דִּנְיָאֵל וְאַיּוֹב הֵמָּה בְּצַדִּיקוֹתָם וְנִצְלוּ נַפְשָׁם נְאֻם אֲנִי...ד...ג...ה'
[א...ל'קים].

The Word of G-d came to me saying. 'Son of Man, when a land will sin against Me to make a violation, I will turn My hand against it and I will break its staff of bread and I sent hunger in it and I will excise from it man and animal. These three men who are in its midst, Noach, Doniyel, and Iyov –they because of their righteousness will save their lives', said the Master Hashem G-d.

¹⁶ Chazal (Masseches B'rachos 24 a) teach us that *אשתו כגופו*, a person's wife is like himself. Therefore the merit that saved Noach saved his wife as well and the merit that saved Lot, saved Lot's wife as well.

Of course, Noach was not a contemporary of Yechezkel, he lived many centuries earlier. It is likely that Iyov was not a contemporary either¹⁷.

What then, is the relevance of these three individuals for the time of Yechezkel when he was prophesizing regarding the exile that would take place during the reign of Yechonyoh [prior to *Churban Bayis Rishon*]?

Rashi, in his commentary in Yechezkel, writes extensively:

נח דניאל ואיוב - לפי שאלו שלשה ראו שלשה עולמות נח ראה העולם בנוי וחרב ובנוי ודניאל את בית המקדש או את עצמו תחלה שר על כל השרים סוף הושלך לגוב אריות וחרב לגדולתו וכן איוב ראה את עצמו מיושב וחרב ומיושב לפיכך הביאו דוגמא לדורו של יכניה שראו את הבית בבנינו וחרבנו ובנין שני וכן אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא חיבה יתירה אני מראה לכם אתם יכניה וגלותו אילו תחטא לי אחת מארצות העכו"ם וגזרתי עליהם אחת מארבעת שפטים אלה או רעב או חיה רעה או חרב או דבר כמו שמסודרין בפרשה זו זה אחר זה ושלושת הצדיקים אלו בתוכה לא יצילו לא בן ולא בת ואני אביא ארבעתן על ירושלים ואשאיר לכם מבניכם אשר שם...

Noach, Doniyel and Iyov – Because these three saw three worlds: Noach saw the world built, destroyed and rebuilt. Doniyel saw the Beis HaMikdosh –or he saw himself first as a head minister and then he was cast into the lions' den and then he was restored to his high position. Similarly, Iyov saw himself settled well, destroyed and then resettled.

Therefore Yechezkel brings an example to the times of Yechonyoh¹⁸ that saw the first Bais HaMidosh standing and then its destruction and then the second Bais HaMikdosh.

HaKodosh Boruch said to the generation of Yechonyoh, 'I am showing you extra love – you, Yechonyoh and the exiles.

If one of the idolatrous nations will sin against Me, I will decree upon them one of the judgments: famine, or wild animals, or the enemy's sword or

¹⁷ In Masseches Bava Basra (14 b and 15 a), Chazal attempt to date Iyov. Some opinions place him at the time of Avraham Ovinu, some at the time of Moshe Rabbenu.

¹⁸ He was the king of Judea at that time.

pestilence—as is written later on in this section. Even if those three righteous people, Noach, Doniyel or Iyov was among them they would be unable to save their sons or daughters.

But, you – I will bring all of the four judgments upon Yerushalayim and I will let some of your sons survive.

This is the principle upon which Seforno bases his commentary. He continues:

וזה כי לא למדו את דורם לדעת את ה', כאברהם משה ושמאל זולתם, כאמרם זכרונם לברכה, עילם, והם דניאל וחביריו, זכתה ללמוד ולא זכתה ללמד. וכן נח אף על פי שהוכיח על המעשים המקלקלים ענין המדינות, לא הורה אותם לדעת הקל יתברך וללכת בדרכיו, אף על פי שהוא היה צדיק תמים בעיון ובמעשה.

The reason that these three, including Noach, did not have the merit to save their offspring is because they did not teach their generation to know Hashem. They were not like Moshe, Sh'muel and others [who did teach others to know Hashem]. This is in accord with Chazal's statement (Masseches Pesachim 87 a) that when we read in [Sefer Doniyel Perek 8/Posuk 2¹⁹] the place called *Ei'lom* – it refers to Doniyel and his compatriots. *Eilom* merited to learn but not to teach.

¹⁹ The entire verse reads:

וְאֶרְאָה בְּחֶזְוֹן וַיְהִי בְּרָאִתִּי וְאֲנִי בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבֵּיִרָה אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵלְמַי הַמְּדִינָה וְאֶרְאָה בְּחֶזְוֹן וְאֲנִי הֵיְיָתִי עַל אוֹבַל אוֹלָי:

I, Doniyel, saw in a vision and it was when I saw myself in the capitol city of Shushan that is in *Eilom* the country, I saw in the vision and I was near the *U'lai* River.

The Gemara says that *Eilom* refers to Doniyel himself and associates it with the parable of the young girl who was not yet able to nurse others. I.e. Doniyel did not give to others the nourishment that he had for himself.

See the Gemara and Rashi there for the full source of the interpretation.

The word *Eilom*, besides being identified as a country in the verse in Sefer Doniyel, also could mean 'hidden'. This implies that the knowledge that Doniyel had was hidden from others.

Noach was similar because even though he rebuked people regarding their practices that corrupted their country, he did not instruct them to know G-d and to go in His ways – even though Noach was righteous and pure in his own thinking and in his actions.

Evidently, the rebuke that Noach offered was to deter individuals from corrupt practice but not to direct them to the service of G-d. Noach knew what the service of G-d was but he did not share it with others^{20, 21}.

See Rashi to Sh'mos Perek 3/Posuk 15 for a discussion of the word לעלם regarding its meaning of being hidden.

²⁰ See note 32 in Rav Copperman's commentary there in which he suggests that the fault with the rebuke that Noach offered was that it was not based on Divine values – those of the Seven Noachide laws. Rather, the rebuke was based on the welfare of civilization to function well.

Thus, rather from offering a rebuke from a Divine perspective, Noach offered one from a secular 'humanistic' perspective and that was its grave defect.

Rav Copperman often cited the writings of Rav Elchanan Wasserman ZT"l, Hashem Yikom Domo in *Ik'vasa D'Mishicha*, that any type of 'ism' is inherently wrong since it implies an ideology that is distinct from Torah. Thus, Rav Copperman identifies a similar theme in these words of Seforno.

It is appropriate for me to point out that not all agree with this formulation of the great Gaon Rav Elchanan Wasserman ZT"l, a dedicated Talmid of both Rav Chaim Soloveitchik and the Chofetz Chaim Zecher Tzaddikim LiVracha.

My Rebbe Rav Aharon Soloveichik ZT"l had no hesitation in saying that **Zionism** was a proper value.

²¹ It is most necessary to have a nuanced view of the limitations of the rebuke that Noach offered to his neighbors.

From the words of Seforno a short while later it does appear that the rebuke was valuable in and of itself.

We read at the beginning of Parshas Noach (Perek 6/Posuk 10):

וַיֹּלֵד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים אֶת שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יָפֶת׃

Noach gave birth to three sons: Shem, Chom and Yefes.

As great as this deficit is, what is the relationship between this lack of sharing knowledge of G-d with others and not having the merit to save his children? Seforno has an explanation for that as well. He continues:

כי אמנם צדיק המשלים עצמו בלבד, הוא ראוי שימלט עצמו בלבד, אבל המשלים גם את זולתו, הוא ראוי שימלט גם את זולתו, כי בזה יש תקוה שיחזירם בתשובה...

Because, in truth, a *Tzaddik* who only attempts to bring himself to perfection – he merits saving himself from destruction. A *Tzaddik* who wishes to help the other to reach perfection as well, he merits saving others besides himself because then there is a hope that he will bring others to repentance.

What an extraordinary statement! Noach lived in a generation of evildoers. The Torah does not spare us the knowledge of their wickedness.

Thus we read in our Parsha (B'reishis Perek 6/P'sukim 11-13):

This verse seems completely unnecessary because a few verses earlier, at the end of Parshas B'reishis (Perek 5/Posuk 32) we received the same information:

וַיְהִי נֹחַ בֶּן חֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֻּלְּד נֹחַ אֶת שֵׁם אֶת חָם וְאֶת יָפֶת׃

Noach was 500 years old and Noach gave birth to Shem, to Chom and to Yefes.

Seforno points out that this second verse, in Parshas Noach, is telling us why Noach merited sons. He writes:

ויולד נח. מאז שהתחיל להוכיח בני דורו זכה לבנים:

Noach gave birth – When he began to rebuke those of his generation, Noach merited sons.

Since Seforno has taught us that great people merit saving others if they will bring them close to HaKodosh Boruch Hu, it must be that this rebuke that Noach offered did have an aspect of caring. Thus Noach had the potential to help others and thus was given children whom he could influence and direct to serving G-d. Alas, Noach did not live up to his potential.

As noted already, a rebuke that only tells a person what he or she did wrong is of limited value unless, together with that rebuke, there are words that supply direction and guidance of what to do, not just what to avoid, in order to come close to G-d.

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָי הָאֱלֹהִים... לִקְיָם וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ וַהֲיָה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֶת דְּרָכָו עַל הָאָרֶץ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לִנְחֹ קָץ כָּל בָּשָׂר בָּא לְפָנָי כִּי מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַהֲנִי מִשְׁחִיתָם אֶת הָאָרֶץ:

The land was corrupt before G-d and the land was filled with violence. G-d saw the land and behold it was corrupt because all flesh corrupted its way upon the land. G-d said to Noach, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me because the land is full with violence because of them; behold I am destroying them with the land.'

Rashi writes:

ותשחת - לשון ערוה ועבודה זרה...

The land became corrupt – 'Corruption' is an expression of promiscuity and idolatry.

ותמלא הארץ חמס - גזל:

The land was filled with violence – thievery.

כי השחית כל בשר - אפילו בהמה חיה ועוף נזקקין לשאינן מינן:

Because all flesh was corrupt – even domesticated animals and wild animals and birds had relations with species other than their own²².

²² Although its explanation is beyond us, we cannot ignore Rashi's comment to the following verse. We read in our Parsha (Perek 8/Posuk 7) after the waters subsided:

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת הָעֹרֵב וַיֵּצֵא וַיָּצֵא וְשׁוֹב עַד יְבֹשֶׁת הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

He sent out the raven and it went to and fro until the water was dried from upon the land.

Rashi writes, in explanation of this multi-week patrolling of the raven:

יצא ושוב - הולך ומקיף סביבות התיבה ולא הלך בשליחותו שהיה חושדו על בת זוגו, כמו ששינו באגדת חלק (סנהדרין קח ב):

To and fro – it went and encircled the Ark and did not proceed to its task because the raven suspected Noach regarding the raven's wife. This is what we learn in Massechet Sanhedrin.

קץ כל בשר - כל מקום שאתה מוצא זנות ועבודה זרה, אנדרלמוסיא באה לעולם
והורגת טובים ורעים:

The end of all flesh – wherever you find promiscuity and idolatry, plague comes to the world that kills the good and the bad.

כי מלאה הארץ חמס - לא נחתם גזר דינם אלא על הגזל:

Because the land was filled with violence – The decree was sealed against them because of thievery.

If Noach had been willing to share his inspiration with others, had he been interested in influencing the compact world²³ in which he lived, then, *Seforno*, implies, G-d would have spared the entire world²⁴. This is certainly an appropriate idea in relationship to Seforno's commentary on an immediately preceding verse.

Prior to teaching us regarding the favor that Noach found in the eyes of G-d, we read (Perek 6/P'sukim 5-6):

וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ וְכֹל יִצְרַר מִחַשְׁבֹּת לִבּוֹ רַק רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנְחַם ה' כִּי עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֵל לִבּוֹ:

Hashem saw that the evil of man in the land was great and that all the tendencies of the thoughts of his heart were only bad, all of the time. Hashem regretted that He made man in the land and was saddened to His heart.

Seforno writes:

²³ Only many years later, were people separated into different countries with different languages.

²⁴ Of course, without a specific revelation we cannot predict or understand G-d's actions so our speculation is limited. However, see Or HaChaim HaKodosh to Perek 6/Posuk 10 where he questions why the righteous are lost despite the merit that they have.

But, we saw that Rashi relates to the question when he writes that the plague kills the good with the bad.

ויתעצב אל לבו. כי לא יחפוץ במות המת²⁵ וההפך "ישמח ה' במעשיו" (תהלים קד/לא²⁶):

He was saddened to his heart – Because Hashem does not want the dead to die and, the opposite, 'Hashem wishes to rejoice with His actions'.

G-d's wish for mankind to survive is not that they should have a physical life only. His wish for mankind to survive is that they should realize their spiritual lives and those spiritual lives should invigorate them.

Life alone, solely in its physical sense, is not the goal. Therefore, if we know that a life will not have any spiritual sense, the Torah gives what may seem like a harsh prescription.

Why is the rebellious son, the *בן סורר ומורה*, put to death when he is barely a man? Chazal (Masseches Sanhedrin Perek 8/Mishnah 5) say:

בן סורר ומורה נדון על שם סופו ימות זכאי ואל ימות חייב

The rebellious son is judged because of what his end will be. Better he should die innocent than dying guilty.

But, if he could *live* innocently, that would be the best! Noach had the opportunity but squandered it.

We also learn from the actions of Aharon HaKohen. We learn in Masseches Ovos (Perek 1/Mishnah 11):

הלל אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה:

²⁵ Seforno is paraphrasing a verse from Sefer Yechezkel (Perek 18/Posuk 32):

כִּי לֹא אֶחְפֹּץ בְּמוֹת הַמֵּת נָאֵם אֱלֹהֵינוּ... ה' וְהָשִׁיבוּ וְחִיּוּ:

I will not want for the dead to die, said the Master Hashem E...lokim, return and you live.

²⁶ The entire verse reads:

יְהִי כְבוֹד ה' לְעוֹלָם יִשְׂמַח ה' בְּמַעֲשָׁיו:

The glory of G-d is forever; Hashem will rejoice in His deeds.

Hillel says, Be among the disciples of Aharon: He loves peace; he pursues peace; he loves people and draws them near to Torah.

Aharon HaKohen was not only interested in improving the quality of personal and societal life, he desired to improve their spiritual life as well.

Didn't Avraham Ovinu open his home and then instruct people to make a Bracha to know Hashem?

And what did Avraham say and mean when Hashem told him of the impending birth of Yitzchak Ovinu? We read (B'reishis Perek 17/Posuk 18):

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים... לִיקִים לוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל יְחִיָּה לְפָנָיִךְ:

Avraham said to G-d, 'If only Yishmael will live before You.

Avraham did not say, 'if only Yishmael will live'. He said, 'before You' and thus Rashi explains:

יְחִיָּה לְפָנָיִךְ - יְחִיָּה בִּירְאָתְךָ...

He should live before You – Yishmael should live with the fear of You.

And now we have an understanding of the fatal flaw of the *Tzaddik* Noach²⁷.

The great people who were not satisfied only with their own accomplishments in the realm of their relationship with HaKodosh Boruch but who wished to enable

²⁷ We are reminded here of the semi-disparaging Yiddish description of Noach: he was a *צדיק אין פעלץ*; literally, a Tzaddik in a fur coat.

Noach is reminiscent of a fine person who wants to stay warm; he dons a heavy coat and is comfortable. But, he is ignoring the suffering of all those who do not have such warm apparel.

Avraham Ovinu also wanted to keep warm so he lit a fire that warmed him and warmed others.

Or as Chazal put it (Masseches Shabbos 122 a):

נר לאחד נר למאה

A candle that gives light and warmth to one can give that same light and warmth at the very same time to a hundred.

others to reach that very same level are those upon whose merits sinful generations are able to survive. G-d anticipates their repentance; that is why He created them.

Those great people partner with HaKodosh Boruch Hu in letting the world go forward.

HaKodosh Boruch Hu expects great things from great people. Great people are His emissaries on earth to instill reverence for Him and to guide people on how to serve Hashem properly.

That guidance has two parts: סור מרע – avoiding evil and עשה טוב, actions that bring a person closer to G-d²⁸.

The great person is expected to do more than to identify what is wrong; he is to provide suggestions as to do what is right. That is in his ability because he is a great person.

The failure of a great person to reach his potential as such brings a loss to him and to others, as Seforno has told us.

However, we should not view this profile of great people as being made up of the traits of the likes of Avraham, Shmuel and others and thus being out of the reach of all of us who are far from being great people.

We remember what Rambam writes in the beginning of the fifth Perek of Hilchos Teshuvah (Halochos 1-3):

רשות לכל אדם נתונה אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה ולהיות צדיק הרשות בידו,
ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה ולהיות רשע הרשות בידו...

It is within the control of every person that if he wishes to turn himself to a good path and be a Tzaddik – it is in his control. If he wishes to turn himself to a bad path and to be a wicked person – it is in his control.

²⁸ These two aspects are part of the message that Dovid HaMelech Olov HaShalom gave us in Tehillim (Perek 34/Posuk 15):

סור מרע ועשה טוב בקש שלום ורדפהו:

Turn from evil and do good; seek completeness and pursue it.

אל יעבור במחשבתך...שהקדוש ברוך הוא גוזר על האדם מתחלת ברייתו להיות צדיק או רשע, אין הדבר כן אלא כל אדם ראוי לו להיות צדיק כמשה רבינו או רשע כירבעם

You should not think that Hashem decrees upon a person when he is created if he will be a Tzaddik or a Ro'sho'. It is not so. Rather, every person has the potential to be righteous like Moshe Rabbenu or wicked like Yarov'om.

ודבר זה עיקר גדול הוא והוא עמוד התורה והמצוה...

This matter is a great principle and a pillar of Torah and Mitzvos.

Sefer B'reishis is in its infancy. The Torah has just begun. We only begin to meet Avraham Ovinu at the end of our Parshas Noach.

From its very beginning the Torah is not ashamed to show us failure and to remind us that we are not fated to failure.

The contrary is true. We each have extraordinary potential and the more that we do to reach that potential the more that we will benefit and bring blessing to all who surround us now and all those whom G-d will grant us to raise and guide in the wonderful future that can await us all.

Chodesh Tov

Shabbat Shalom

A Gezunte Vinter

Rabbi Pollock

ⁱ Parshas Noach affords us the opportunity to raise our awareness regarding proper pronunciation in *L'shon HaKodesh*.

We all know that נֹח-*Noach* is written with the letter *ches* as its second letter and a *patach*-vowel is written underneath it.

In other circumstances, if we see the letter *ches* with the *patach*-vowel written under it, it is read as *Cha*, like in the word *cha'im*. But, in the case of *Noach*, we read his name as ***No-ach*** [with the ***no*** syllable accented], not *No-cha*.

When the letter *ches* or the letter *heh* appears at the end of the word and there is a *patach*-vowel under it, that syllable is read as *ach* not *cha*. It is read as *ach* as if there was the letter *alef* before the *ches*, with a *patach*-vowel under it.

There is a name for this phenomenon. It is *patach genvah* – a stolen *patach*-vowel.

This phenomenon occurs in other places as well. Look at Sefer Esther, Perek 5/Posuk 14 and Perek 7/Posuk 9 where we find the word גבוה. The verses there discuss the gallows that was prepared for Mordechai and used for Homon.

There, too, the final letter *heh* has a *patach*-vowel underneath it. That is a *patach genvah* as well and is read *go'vo'ah* [with the ***vo*** syllable accented], not *go'vo'hah*.

The most frequent incidence of *patach genvah* is with one of the Names of Hashem. We often see the word אלוה...לוה (sometimes with and sometimes without the letter *vo* after the letter *lamed*).

This word is written with the *patach*-vowel under the letter *heh*. But that last syllable is not read as *ha*, but as *ah*, as if there was a letter *alef* with a *patach*-vowel under it preceding the letter *heh*. Thus the word is read *E...lo'ah* [with the ***lo*** syllable accented] and not *E...lo...ha*.

One such familiar example is what we read in Hallel. The Posuk (Tehillim Perek 114/Posuk 7) writes:

מִלִּפְנֵי אֲדוֹן חוּלֵי אֶרֶץ מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁקֵב:

From before The Master Who created the land, from before the G-d of Yaakov. If read correctly, the final words of the verse are *E...Io'ah Yaakov*.

Besides the obligation to read all Hebrew correctly and precisely, as is written in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 61 [which focusses on *Sh'ma* but refers to all of *Tefila* – see s'if 22 there] reading the Name of G-d with precision is certainly even more significant since that reading has to have particular *kavanah* [see Shulchan Aruch ibid. Siman 5].

There are other Halachic implications that go beyond the correct reading itself.

In Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 644/s'if 1) we learn, regarding *Hallel*:

ומברכים: לגמור את ההלל

We recite the B'racha *Lig'mor es haHallel* – to *complete* the Hallel [prior to its recitation].

However, in Siman 488 (s'if 1), Rama writes:

ומברכין לקרות ההלל

We recite the *bracha* as to read the *Hallel*.

That is, there is a dispute between *Maran* the Shulchan Aruch and the Rama as to the proper blessing to recite prior to reading Hallel. *Eidos HaMizrach* follow the opinion of the *Mechaber* and Ashkenazim follow the opinion of the Rama.

[Ashkenazim say, לקרא את ההלל today.]

In this latter source, Mishnah Brurah explains that there is a significant difference between the implications of the two *nuschaos* – texts.

Regarding the text of לגמור, to complete, he writes in *s'if koton* 2:

ואם חיסר פסוק אחד או תיבה אחת צריך להתחיל אחר כך מאותו פסוק ולגמור עד סוף ההלל דאם יאמרנו במקום שנזכר הוה לה קריאה למפרע ולא יצא:

If he omitted a Posuk or [even] one word from a specific verse, he has to go back to that verse and complete Hallel in order until its end. If he would say that verse only in the place that he remembered and not go back and read in order, that would be a retroactive reading and he would not have fulfilled the Mitzvah of reading Hallel.

In s'if koton 3, Mishnah Brurah explains why Ashkenazim do not say לקרא את ההלל – to *complete* the Hallel. We read:

לקרות ההלל – רצונו לומר שלא יאמר לגמור ההלל דשמא ידלג תיבה או אות אחת ויש חשש ברכה לבטלה ואם אמר לגמור יצא ובמקום שנהגו לומר לגמור אין לבטל מנהגם.

To read the Hallel – Rama means to say that one shouldn't use the text לגמור to complete because he may omit a word or [even] a letter and there is a concern that the brachah would be in vain [because he didn't *complete* the entire Hallel]. If he said לגמור – to *complete* [and said the entire Hallel] he does not need to recite another Bracha.

Those places that the custom is to say לגמור should not change their custom.

Though I am certainly not paskening the Halachah, the mispronunciation of *E...lo'ah* would certainly raise the question of whether or not one fulfilled the Mitzvah of reciting Hallel, especially if the blessing that was recited was לגמור.

See also Parshas Haazinu, D'vorim Perek 32/P'sukim 15 and 17 and Rashi there.