



Parashat "Noach"

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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A New Twist to the Story of the Flood: The Animals Saved Noach!

Parshas [Noach](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The *pasuk* in Parshas Noach says, “For in another seven days’ time I will send rain upon the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out all existence that I have made, from upon the face of the ground. And Noach did according to everything that *Hashem* had commanded him.” (Bereshis 7:4-5) All things being equal, our first impression would be to think that the words “And Noach did all that *Hashem* commanded him” means that he built the *Teivah* (Ark). However, that is not how Rashi explains it. Rashi interprets “And Noach did what he was commanded” to refer to the fact that Noach **came** to the *Teivah*. This is certainly not the simple way of understanding *pasuk* 5.

The question raised by the Ohr HaChaim is more difficult. The Ohr HaChaim asks on Rashi: We don’t need a *pasuk* to ambiguously allude to the fact that Noach entered the *Teivah*. The Torah states explicitly that Noach went into the *Teivah* – first in Bereshis 7:7 “And Noach came with his sons and wife and daughters-in-law with him into the *Teivah* because of the flood waters” and again a few *pesukim* later in Bereshis 7:13 “On that very day Noach came with his sons Shem, Cham, and Yefes, and his wife and his three daughters-in-law with them into the *Teivah*.”

Those who comment on Rashi explain that *pasuk* 7:5 is not teaching us that Noach went **into** the *Teivah*. That we learn from *pesukim* 7 and 13. Rashi is explaining that “And Noach did that which he was commanded” means he came **up to** the *Teivah*. So the question becomes, what is the big deal here? It does not seem significant that Noach came up to the door of the *Teivah*!

The Tolner Rebbe cites a very interesting observation from the Tiferes Shlomo, the Radomske Rebbe. The Medrash says in two places that Avraham asked Noach's son Shem, "How were you able to save yourself from the waters of the flood, from the great wrath that was present in the world at that time?" He paraphrases the Medrash's recording of Shem's response to Avraham. Shem said, "I don't know why we were saved. All I know is that the entire year of the flood, all we did was take care of the animals, night and day." The Medrash Tanchuma is a little more explicit: "Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, asked Shem: 'What did you do in the *Teivah*?' Shem responded, 'Those animals that ate at night we were busy feeding at night; those animals that ate during the day, we were busy feeding during the day.' The entire twelve months, neither Noach nor his sons tasted sleep."

The reason Noach was saved was that he had *rachmanus* (mercy) on the animals. In this merit, he survived the flood. *Rachmanus* begets *rachmanus*. This also answers another question. The Talmud teaches (Bava Kama 60a) that when permission is granted to the Angel of Destruction (to destroy), there is no distinction between the righteous and the wicked. So why was Noach and his family saved? The answer is what Shem the son of Noach told Avraham and Eliezer: We were saved for one reason, and one reason only—because we had mercy on the animals.

Based on this, the Tiferes Shlomo answers another question. The Medrash says (as Rashi brings) that in the final analysis the decree was only pronounced upon the *Dor Hamabul* (Generation of the Flood) for the sin of theft. Certainly, the *Dor Hamabul* did far worse things than stealing from one another. They engaged in all sorts of sexual perversions. (I can still tell it like it is and call it

perversion—even though such labeling is no longer allowed in other segments of society!)

True, theft is not a nice thing. But “and the entire earth was corrupted (by sexual perversions)” (Bereshis 6:11) to the extent that it had a corrupting influence even on the animals—that seems far worse. So when there was promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, and all types of other sexual perversions throughout society, how is it that the final decree came down because of theft? Why is that the “straw that broke the camel’s back?”

The answer is that had they engaged in all this other terrible activity but they would have been nice to each other and have had mercy on one another, that merit of *rachmanus* would have saved them. Maybe it would not have saved them entirely, but the *Ribono shel Olam* would have meted out the punishment slowly, over a long period of time. He would not have wiped out the entire world in a matter of a year. People can do a lot of bad things, but if they behave properly with their fellow men, that goes a long way in protecting them from punishment.

The upshot of all of this is an amazing way of looking at the story in our *parsha*. Who saved whom in the story of Noach and the *Teivah*? We thought Noach saved the animals! Noach took the animals with him and saved all living things. However, based on this Medrash, the Tiferes Shlomo says that it was just the opposite! The animals saved Noach! Because he had mercy upon them and mercy begets mercy, therefore Noach was not subject to the rule that “Once the Destroyer is permitted to destroy, he does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.”

Based on all of this, the Tolner Rebbe says that this is what Rashi is teaching by interpreting “And Noach did that which Hashem commanded” to mean that Noach came **up**

to (rather than **into**) the *Teivah*. Why is that significant? It is because the simple act of going up to the *Teivah* separated Noach from his entire generation. When he walked to the *Teivah* he was telling the rest of society “I don’t want to have anything to do with you.” By separating himself and preparing the *Teivah*, Noach accepted the task of preparing to save the world. According to Rashi, the praise that the *pasuk* gives Noach is: He went up to the *Teivah* – demonstrating his *rachmanus* for the future of all birds and wildlife on the planet!

Noach Invents Retirement

Parshas [Noach](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Retirement: A Concept Introduced by Noach for Noachides

The Medrash Shochar Tov in Tehillim says that three righteous individuals were the foundation of the earth. Adam, Noach, and Avraham. There is an expression that is used all too commonly. We refer to a person as a “*Tzadik Yesod Olam*” [A righteous person, foundation of the world]. There are plenty of righteous people, but the accolade “*Tzadik Yesod Olam*” is a very specific title referring to a very special type of righteous person: A *Tzadik* who is literally “the foundation of the world.”

The world rests, so to speak, on the shoulders of such a *Tzadik*. Today there has been inflation in many areas. There is “grade inflation” in schools. Everything is inflated. Today, coming three times a day to daven with a minyan already seems to qualify a person as a “*Tzadik Yesod Olam*.” This is an overstated exaggeration that cheapens a title that should be reserved for truly unique individuals. The Medrash says only the three

aforementioned people deserve this title: Adam, Noach, and Avraham.

The Almighty created the world. He had envisioned that the world would come to perfection through the First Man. Adam was a "*Tzadik Yesod Olam*." Unfortunately, as we all know, within the first day of his creation, Adam sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge and the potential that was within him for the perfection of the universe went by the wayside.

The Almighty waited ten generations. There is a connection between the "Ten Generations" and the "Ten Utterances" with which the world was created. He waited ten generations to come up with another individual who had the potential to be the "*Tzadik Yesod Olam*"— the righteous individual upon whom the world would rest. That person was Noach. But unfortunately, in the interval of the ten generations that came into existence from Adam to Noach, the world had "gone down the tube." The Almighty did find Noach to be a *Tzadik*, and despite the fact that He decided to destroy the entire world, "Noach found favor in the Eyes of the L-rd" and Noach became the next person upon whom the Almighty wished to base the world. The *Ribono shel Olam*, as it were, started over with Noach – a new world.

Noach was to be the *Tzadik Yesod Olam*. Noach was saved. He saved the world. He repopulated the world. Those who came after him are not called "Children of Adam," they are called "Children of Noach". We are direct descendants of Noach because all other descendants of Adam were destroyed. Noach, after saving the world, emerged from the Taiva and "And Noach, the man of the earth, debased himself (*vaYachel Noach*) by planting a vineyard." [Bereishis 9:20]. Rashi quotes Chazal that the word *vaYachel* implies debasement. Rashi points out that out of all

the things that someone could plant, Noach should not have planted a vineyard.

Noach did plant a vineyard, he drank the wine, he became drunk, and Noach also failed in his mission to be the *Tzadik Yesod Olam*. Once again, it was not destined that the whole world should come to perfection during the days of Noach.

The *Ribono shel Olam* waited another ten generations—the “Ten Generations from Noach until Avraham.” Finally, the Almighty found in the patriarch Avraham the *Tzadik Yesod Olam* for whom He had been waiting for twenty generations! Avraham Avinu had Yitzchak. Yitzchak had Yaakov. And Yaakov had the Tribes of G-d (*Shivtei K-ah*). We, *Klal Yisrael*, are the descendants of Yaakov and we are supposed to carry on this mission of bringing the world to perfection.

That which Noach failed to do, Avraham Avinu accomplished. The question is – this Noach, with which we begin the parsha – “Noach, was a completely righteous man in his generation” (This is not a paid announcement in a newspaper where you find all kinds of titles used; this is the *Ribono shel Olam* talking! He does not use such terminologies carelessly) – does appear to have the makings of a *Tzadik Yesod Olam*. And yet he went from being “*Tzadik Tamim*” [completely righteous] [Bereishis 6:9] to be coming an “*Ish Adamah*” [man of the earth] [Bereishis 9:20].

Chazal point out that Moshe began as a shepherd and he ended his life as an *Ish haElokim* [a man of G-d]. Noach, somehow, went in the other direction. How did this happen to Noach? How did this person who had such potential, and in whom the Almighty saw such potential – how did it happen to him that the first thing he did after leaving the Taiva was planting a vineyard and getting drunk? There is a Sefer on Chumash called *Chikrei Lev* from a Rabbi Leibel Hyman Z”L (an old-time Baltimorean who was a Rosh

Yeshiva in America, and who later moved to *Eretz Yisrael* where he was a Rav). He suggests a theory as to what happened to Noach: During the whole period of the Flood, Noach had a horrible time. He was not enjoying life on a cruise ship. Besides the fact that the whole world was destroyed, and he was aware of that, Noach literally could not sleep. There are animals that eat during the day and there are nocturnal animals that eat during the night. Just feeding the animals – every single species that was in the world – by the time Noach came out of the Taiva, he was a broken man to say the least. He was, however, a man who felt that he accomplished his mission. He literally saved the world. From now on, everyone is going to be a *Ben Noach* – one of his descendants! What more can people accomplish in this world than what Noach accomplished? He saved the world and he saved it at great personal stress and pain. The experience was horrible!

When a person feels “I have done my job in this world” certain emotions go with that feeling: It is time for me to relax, to take off my shoes, put my feet up on the table, lean back, and enjoy myself. It is time for me to call it a career, call it a lifetime. The way Noach envisioned doing that was to plant a vineyard and drink the produce thereof and enjoy life. His attitude was: I have it coming! I earned it! I did what I was supposed to do! What else do You want from me?

Herein lies Noach’s tragic mistake. There is no such thing as “I did my job. Now I can go and retire.” One can retire when he is in the grave. Until that time, we have a mission to complete. No matter how great the accomplishment that we have had in this world thus far, this world is “today to do it; and tomorrow to receive reward.” [Eruvin 22a]

The *Chikrei Lev* makes a very interesting sociological observation. There is a common—almost universal—opinion in the world that

after a person completes his job he retires. That, he says, is a concept for Children of Noach. It started with Noach. This was Noach's gift to the world—the idea of retirement. Therefore, his descendants—Bnei Noach—follow in his footsteps. If you are lucky, you can do it at 62, if you retire on full Social Security, you can do it at 66, if you become a millionaire, you can do it at 54, and so forth. But at some point, you retire. And then what do you do? I don't know. You can travel the country, you can read the paper, you can take up bridge.

That is not what the *Ribono shel Olam* expected from human beings. Retirement is something a Jew should never think about. That does not mean that a person can never stop working a job. But no one should have the attitude "I am finished. I can sit back and relax now."

I recently met someone who had a heart attack at a young age. I had lunch with him, I was sitting and talking with him and I asked, "How is your health?" He told me, "Baruch Hashem, I can take care of myself now." Then he told me, "My doctor is retiring." This can be a traumatic event. Someone may have been with a doctor for thirty, forty, or fifty years. Now that he knows my conditions and my medical history so well, he is retiring. Who am I going to start with now?

His doctor—who was a religious Jew—retired on August 31st. My friend, who had been this doctor's patient, davens in a Kollel in a certain city. On September 1, who should walk into the Kollel? It was his former doctor, with an Art Scroll Gemara Brochos under his arm. He is retired. A person does not need to practice medicine—or accounting or law or computers or whatever it is—for his entire life. People should live and be well! But a person must do something. A person needs to do something worthwhile and fulfilling.

That was Noach's mistake. "I already did what I was supposed to do. What else do You want from me? Now I am going to sit back and enjoy myself." That is a *Bnei Noach* attitude—not a *Bnei Yisrael* type of attitude.

Avraham Avinu came. He was the third *Tzadik Yesod Olam*. That which Adam could not accomplish and Noach could not accomplish, Avraham was able to accomplish. Not only did he accomplish, but he fixed this false ideology of Noach. How is that? The Ramban says that the tenth of the Ten Tests with which Avraham Avinu was tested was the burial of Sara. After the *Akeida* [Binding of Yitzchak], Avraham Avinu needed to go and bargain on the price of a plot for Sara, even though the *Ribono shel Olam* had already promised him all of *Eretz Yisrael*. This is the tenth test. Everyone asks the question: Okay, it was a hassle. It was unpleasant. He might be distressed. However, if test number nine was *Akeidas Yitzchak* and Avraham passed the test successfully, is test number ten not somewhat anticlimactic? It does not seem to be on the same scale at all! Why is that the ultimate test?

The answer is that this does not suggest that burying Sara was more difficult than the *Akeida*. The *Akeida* was the most difficult test—to be asked to slaughter one's beloved son. Nothing surpasses the difficulty of that! But after the *Akeida* and eight prior tests, Avraham could well have thought "I reached the pinnacle." I passed the ultimate test. He could have had the thought "I have been to the mountain! What more do You want from me? Enough already! What do You want from me, Master of the Universe?" No! That was not his attitude.

Avraham had no complaints. He had no questions. He went from the *Akeida* to dealing with the hassle of negotiation with Ephron and paying an exorbitant price for a burial plot for his wife, Sara. That is why it is the tenth test. It is the test of how a person deals

with life after he figures and feels that he is entitled to the easy life now. He rejects the tendency to claim, “I did what I had to do, now give me a break!”

By passing the tenth test, Avraham Avinu corrected the sin of Noach, beginning the legacy of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov – the legacy that no matter what we have done in our lives, it is not over until literally the *Chevra Kadisha* comes or until we are physically unable to continue.

Again, this is not suggesting that we need to die in our offices. No one in the history of mankind ever said on his death bed in regret, “I wish I spent more time in the office.” However, we must remain productive. When we reach the “Golden Years,” while we can perhaps “sit back” and take it easy from our work, we must remember that the Jewish approach remains, “It is today when it must be done; and tomorrow when the reward will be received.”

Time to grow... UP!

And the earth had become corrupt before Hashem . . . (6:11)

Dayan Abramsky deduced from these words that the earth had become corrupt “before Hashem” but it did not seem corrupt to anyone else, for they had become used to the slow decline in holiness and had forgotten how the world was before and how it was meant to be. Thus, only Hashem saw that the world was corrupt, but those living at the time did not sense the extensive deterioration of their surroundings.^[1]

Our inability to view ourselves and our surroundings objectionably often leads us to settle blindly into a detrimental situation. One example of this came from a Rav who recently confided that he had just realized that since his bar mitzvah he had been laying his tefillin incorrectly — for over forty years! He explained that his father had taught him that although the custom was to wrap seven times around the arm,^[2] since this boy had particularly thin arms and the tefillin straps were thin as well, he could be lenient to wrap

the straps around his arm eight times instead. And now, forty years later, the Rav realized that he had never “adjusted” his practice.

There are many examples in our lives where we have not adjusted our practice — be it in our mitzvah observance, our behavior, or our Torah knowledge. And in many cases, we are even maintaining the exact same level from the time of our childhood!

Rav Nachman of Breslov was known to say, “If you are not a better person tomorrow than you are today, then what need do you have for a tomorrow?” Every day is a gift from Above, and it should be appreciated as such. The best way to appreciate a gift is to use it well. If we use our days well and seek to improve our practices, then we will, *b’ezras Hashem*, merit to have many more days to come.

[1] Related by Rav Moshe Sternbuch.

[2] See Mishnah Berurah, Orach Chaim 27:31.

Noach and Shabbos

Written by Rabbi Shimshon Silkin

Noah at the root of Shabbat – an oasis of rest and tranquility in time – the root of that tranquility – *menuchah* – is No-ach – a rock in the midst of the rising tide of evil of that time – the eye of the storm – the ark of the flood. This is Noah- the inspiration to shut out, rise above the swirling waters –this is Shabbat – the power to recharge, refocus, shut the world out, rise above it. And yet Noah is chastised – “honored” with the flood’s association with his name – “the flood of Noah” – for not sharing, caring, opening his world to those drowning around him. Our homes, arks – must be secure but open to the world; and most of all, on Shabbat. Shabbat Shalom! Rabbi Shimshon Silkin

The number 40

Written by Daniel Fine

We know the story; Noach builds an ark and thus survives the flood. (it's v interesting that they have found loads of archaeological evidence as proof that this happened btw; from bones to cave scratching, etc.) Anyway, just a small point; the flood lasts for 40 days. Why 40? the Maharal notes that 40 represents a new creation; thus, Moshe went up to har sinai to receive the Torah for 40 days – the giving of the Torah was a new creation in mankind. And there are 40 days from Rosh Chodesh Elul until end of Yom Kippur too; for that is supposed to be the time when we individually recreate ourselves and our lives. So too, when bringing a flood to the world that was to mark a new creation, 40 was the number of days it spanned.

Humor

Where were the Egyptians during the flood?

In de-nile

What does a cyclone, flood, fire and a woman have in common?

Sooner or later one of them will get your house....

A man who lived by the sea grew a cucumber so large he was able to turn it into his house. One day a bad storm flooded the area with seawater and damaged his home.

Now he's in a pickle.

Two retired business men sitting on a beach.

Mike: Nice to meet you. I'm a retired businessman. When my store burned down, rather than rebuilding I took the insurance money and retired here.

John: You know, I'm a retired businessman, too. When a flood washed away my store I took the insurance money and retired here, too.

Mike is silent for a while then he asks John, "How do you start a flood?"