

Noach

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints
לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת
הר"ר ישעי' זושא
ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם
גלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב
תנצב"ה



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נח Noach

6:9 | ט:ו

נח איש צדיק תמים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו

*Noach was a righteous man,
perfect in his generations.*

Staying Afloat

Parshas Noach begins by describing Noach as “a righteous man, perfect in his generations.” Why does the Torah limit Noach’s righteousness to “in his generations”?

Rashi offers two explanations:

Some of our Sages interpret this in praise of Noach: How much more so that if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. Others interpret it disparagingly: Relative to his generation he was righteous, but if he had been in Avraham’s generation, he would not have been regarded as significant at all.

We know that the Torah goes to great lengths to avoid shaming even non-kosher animals.¹ Certainly, the Torah

1. See Bava Basra 123a.

would not add words just to shame Noah! So why are we told that Noah was not objectively righteous, and was regarded as such only in comparison to the people of his time?

Evidently, Noah's imperfection teaches us an important lesson that we could not have learned without knowing this detail.

Chassidus explains that the Hebrew word for "ark," *teivah*, also means "word." The same way the physical *teivah* provided Noah and his family with safety from the fierce waters of the Flood, the spiritual *teivah* saves a person from drowning in the flood of material concerns that occupy his mind. In order to save yourself from the flood, says the Torah, you must "enter the *teivah*"—immerse yourself in the words of *tefillah* (prayer) and Torah.² One might argue, however, that perhaps this is effective only for the righteous, like Noah. Maybe those who are spiritually deficient cannot save themselves from the "raging floods of worry" by merely "entering the *teivah*" of Torah and *tefillah*?

To dispel this misconception, the Torah emphasizes that the refuge provided by the *teivah* is not only for the perfect and righteous—for if Noah had lived in the generation of Avraham, "he wouldn't have been regarded as significant at all." This teaches that whether you are actually righteous or not, you too can be saved by "entering the *teivah*"—immersing yourself energetically in the words of *tefillah* and Torah. And like Noah, whose family was saved along with him (and even the animals), your entry to the *teivah* will also impact everyone around you, and in fact all of existence.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, pp. 281–283

2. See Keser Shem Tov, Hosafos 11; Torah Ohr, Noah 8c–9a.

 6:9 | ט:ו

נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו

*Noach was a righteous man,
perfect in his generations.*

Don't Get the Wrong Impression

Rashi brings two opinions as to why the Torah emphasizes that Noach was righteous “in his generations”:

Some of our Sages interpret this in praise of Noach: How much more so that if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. Others interpret it disparagingly: Relative to his generation he was righteous, but if he had been in Avraham’s generation, he would not have been regarded as significant at all.

The two views Rashi outlines are not necessarily arguing about Noach’s level of righteousness. It is possible that everyone agrees that in comparison to Avraham, Noach’s conduct was impressive but not ideal. Nevertheless, Noach was not entirely to blame. For all can agree that had he lived in a more righteous generation, the positive environment would have helped him become even greater!

The Sages were debating only what the Torah seeks to communicate by saying that Noach was “perfect in his generation.” Some Sages interpret these words in praise of Noach: despite the negative influences around him, Noach remained righteous, and had he lived in another era, he surely would have been even greater. According to the second opinion, however, the Torah’s emphasis on Noach’s righteousness “in his generation” warns us that although Noach’s inner strength was

certainly praiseworthy, not all aspects of his behavior should be emulated (such as his failure to pray for the people of his generation to be saved).³ Noach's perfection was only relative to his environment; in some areas we must strive to be even greater than Noach was, just as he would have been had he lived in better times.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, pp. 19–21

3. See Zohar 1:67b.

7:23 | זכג

וַיִּשָּׂאֵר אֶדְ נֹחַ וְאִשָּׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתְּכָה

And only Noah and those with him in the ark survived.

The Only Self to Sacrifice is Your Own

Noach's dedication to the animals' needs aboard the ark teaches us the extent to which we must go when we are charged with a Divine mission. Particularly, Noach's devotion to providing his passengers with their sustenance serves as a metaphor for those who have been tasked with providing others with spiritual sustenance.

Rashi describes the physical toll that tending the animals took on Noach:

He was groaning and spitting blood because of the burden of tending to the cattle and the beasts. And some say that he delayed feeding the lion, and it struck him; concerning him it is said:⁴ 'Behold, a righteous man is requited [for his sins] in this world.'⁵

Noach was a spiritual person, the most righteous in his time, yet he fully dedicated himself to the exhausting job of feeding the animals, unabated even by the detriment this caused to his physical health. Emulating Noach, we too must commit ourselves to carrying out our mission to bring the Torah's message of G-dliness and holiness to the world under any circumstances, even if it comes at the expense of our

4. Mishlei 11:31.

5. Bereishis 7:23.

physical comfort. We must not be discouraged, even if we find ourselves “groaning and spitting blood” from the challenges that present themselves.

At the same time, however, we must learn from Noach not to impose this “readiness for discomfort” on others. As Rashi concludes, “Some say that he delayed feeding the lion, and it struck him.” Noach was punished for delaying the lion’s food to teach us that while we must readily sacrifice our own comfort for the success of our vital and lofty mission, the next person’s needs, or even their conveniences, are not ours to sacrifice or delay.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, pp. 53–56

8:16-17 | ח:טז-יז

צא מן התבה אתה ואשתך ובנותי ובנותי ונשי בנותי אתך:
 כל החיה אשר אתך מכל בשר בעוף ובבהמה
 ובכל הרמש הרמש על הארץ הוצא אתך

*Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons,
 and your sons' wives with you. Every living thing that
 is with you of all flesh, of fowl, and of animals and of
 all the creeping things that creep on the earth, bring out
 with you.*

Living the Dream

In his prophecies of the messianic era, Yeshayahu foretells that “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat... and a small child shall lead them.”⁶

A similar atmosphere prevailed in Noach’s ark, where even the most fierce and predatory animals coexisted peacefully, despite their confinement to tiny quarters for an entire year. Moreover, the animals were so peaceful that Noach and his family alone successfully maintained them all and tended to their needs—an operation that would normally require a much larger team of caretakers. Chassidus explains that the peace between all the ark’s occupants was brought about by the extraordinary Divine revelation that was felt in the ark, comparable in nature to the revelations of the era of Moshiach. This remarkable feeling of G-d’s presence overwhelmed the animals and changed their nature, causing even ferocious animals of prey to become peaceful and approachable.

6. Yeshayahu 11:6.

This explains Rashi's commentary on the word הוצא—“bring out”: “It is written הוצא, but it is read הוציא. הוציא means: tell them that they should come out. הוצא means: if they do not wish to come out, you take them out.”

According to Rashi, when the land was finally dry and livable again, and the time came to leave the confines of the ark, G-d alerted Noach that he might have to forcibly remove the animals. One would imagine that after spending a year cooped up in an ark, the animals would be more than happy to leave! But the opposite was true. In the ark's cramped conditions, the animals were given a taste of the utopian era of Moshiach, and who would want to walk away from that?

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, pp. 28–31

לזכות
הת' הערשל לייב שי'
לרגל הכנסו לעול המצוות בשעטו"מ
ביום ב' חשון ה'תשפ"ו

יה"ר שיגדל להיות חסיד, ירא שמים ולמדן
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לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת ברוך
ב"ר שמריהו ע"ה
גרינבלט
נלב"ע ביום ה' מרחשוון ה'תשס"ח
תנצב"ה



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הרה"ת חיים יהושע שלמה
זוגתו מרת שושנה רבקה שיחיו
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