



Parshat HaShavuah

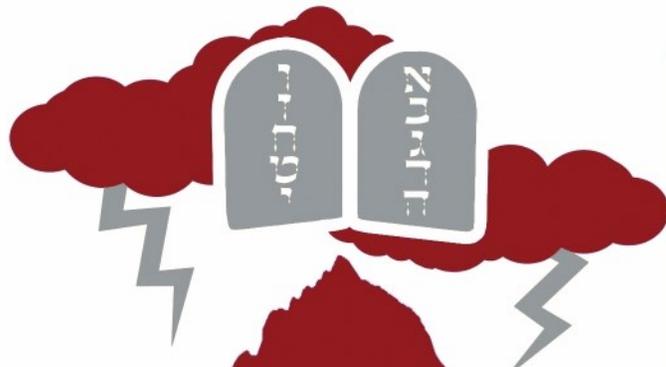
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NOACH

א' חשוון תשע"ה
ראש חודש

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Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

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S"Z Kriat Shema

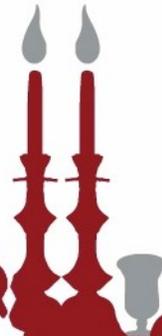
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Sunset

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Motzei
Shabbat

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Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER

At the very end of the Shabbos song "יום שבתוך" the liturgist refers to the flood of this week's parsha as the "מי נח", the waters of Noach. This seems to be a strange description considering the fact that Noach was the only righteous person of his generation!

The Zohar HaKadosh explains that the flood is referred to as "מי נח" because Noach failed to daven for the people of his generation to be saved. Due to the fact that he did not pray for them, he is held (somewhat) responsible for the flood.

It is very troubling that Noach would not daven for the people of his generation. How can this be understood? Rabbi Levi Yitzchak miBerditchev, in his book Kedushat Levi, suggests that while Noach had amazing belief in God, he lacked the proper belief in his own abilities. Noach didn't believe his prayers could make a difference. He improperly assumed he couldn't possibly effect the necessary change through his prayers.

I believe there are two very important and relevant lessons to be gleaned from this understanding of Noach. The first lesson is that one should never take lightly the power of prayer. While it is impossible to witness the power of our tefillot, we should realize the great power of a proper tefillah.

The second lesson is one should never underestimate one's own potential to impact positive change. While Noach may have been righteous, he lacked the self-confidence necessary to influence his peers. Misplaced humility is a sin. We must all have the courage to believe we can change the world.





OUR PRECIOUS GIFT

LEOR LEVENSON ('16)

MONTHLY WRITER

This week's parsha opens with an introduction to the main character, Noach, describing him as "a righteous man, perfect in his generation" (Bereishit 6:9). Rashi raises an interesting question: Had Noach lived during a different time period surrounded by people who did not perform petty theft, would he still be considered a righteous man? Is Noach a great man with respect to the people around him, or is he as righteous as another man that the Torah describes as "perfect" (Bereishit 17:1), namely Avraham?

The best way to find an answer to this question is to examine the lives of these two men. A similarity between them is that Hashem selected both of them from their respective generations to be informed of impending destruction. Hashem informs Noach that the entire world will be destroyed, and he later tells Avraham that the city of Sodom is going to be devastated.

However, the key difference between Noach and Avraham is the way they responded to these prophecies. Noach, when confronted with the news of the flood, complied with Hashem's prediction and immediately began building an ark to save himself and his family. He ignored his responsibility to try and protect the rest of humanity. Avraham, on the other hand, desperately reasoned with Hashem, fighting for every possible life in the wicked city. He argued aggressively, insisting that on the merit of just a few righteous people, the city should remain standing.

Since Noach was the most righteous man in his generation, he merited his own survival; however, Avraham and his descendants, the Jews, inherited a much more precious gift—the ability to stand up for what is right.

The Hebrew word "Noach" means rest and relaxation. While this quality is good in certain circumstances, complacency and contentment can also be a bad thing. Jews, as a light unto the nations, must always strive to create better futures for themselves and for the world as a whole. Jews must not adopt Noach's attitude of complacency, but rather emulate Avraham and *never give up* in the struggle for what is right.

STRIVE FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP

YITZCHAK KAMINETSKY ('15)

In professional sports, there are only three types of teams. There are the teams that are championship contenders each year, there are teams that struggle tremendously and endlessly hope for a good draft pick, and then there are teams somewhere in the middle that make the playoffs but are one of the lowest seeds.

In this week's parsha, Noach is called "*ish tzadik tamim...bidorotav*"—"a complete man in his generations." This pasuk bothers Rashi, who asks: Why does the Torah need to write the word *bidorotav*, generations, in the plural form? Doesn't it make grammatical sense for it to be singular?

Rashi answers that the pasuk is talking about a comparison between two generations—Noach's generation of the flood and Avraham's generation. We then ask: Why can't the Torah say that Noach was a great man, period? What is the point of bringing up Avraham's generation at all?

Rashi answers this question in two ways. His first answer is that it is an insult to Noach by saying that Noach was a great man only *relative* to his generation. However, if had he lived in Avraham's generation, he would have been considered an average joe.

Continued page 3



Kaminetsky continued

The second answer is completely different. The extra word *bidorotav* is a praise of Noach. The Torah points out he was an “*ish tamim*” in his specific generation, and if he had lived in Avraham’s generation, he would have been even greater. He would have developed into an even better person because of the good influences to which he would have been exposed.

Rashi’s seemingly contradictory answers can be combined to teach us an important life lesson. It is an insult to Noach for the exact reason that Rashi says it is praise. Had Noach been in Avraham’s generation, he would have been even greater. However, Noach grew up in an environment where he let his surroundings dictate how he matured, which ultimately lessened his greatness.

Many times we look at ourselves in comparison to others. If we say to ourselves, “I’m not perfect, but I’m not as bad as *that kid*,” we are acting like the teams that barely make the playoffs because they are complacent with the fact that at least they are not one of the worst teams in the league. We try to justify our actions by comparing ourselves to others.

This is a big mistake we often make. If we live our lives thinking that we are good simply because we are not bad, we will never grow to be great. We can’t just stay like the teams that barely make the playoffs, because if we do, we will never attain a championship. We all must strive to grow and improve, and we should not use our negative surroundings as distractions or excuses not to grow.

CHESED: THE WORLD’S FOUNDATION

ILAN GRITZMAN (‘16)

While reading the story of Noach and the *teiva*, we must ask ourselves about the message of this week’s parsha. The Torah says that during the time prior to the *mabul*, improper business ethics were a way of life, people were immoral, and man and earth were on a course toward destruction. The righteous Noach is commanded by Hashem to build a *teiva* in order to save himself and the animal kingdom. What significant message does the *teiva* teach us?

We can answer this question by examining the importance of the fundamental Jewish attribute of *chesed*. David HaMelech said, “*Olam chesed yibaneh- the world is built on chesed*” (Tehilim 89:3). In fact, *chesed* is the foundation of the earth. In order for a society to endure, *chesed* is necessary.

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THE DANGERS OF BEING A ROBOT

AYALA BROIDE (‘17)

Noach is introduced to us as a righteous man. A pure man. A man who, the Torah tells us, does “exactly what God told him to do.” But who is Noach? We hear about his famous story with the flood, and that is it. He isn’t mentioned afterwards. He is not like Avraham, to whom the Torah devotes four weekly portions. And he is certainly not like Moshe, who is seen in the majority of the Torah. What is it that Noach has done wrong? What differentiates him from a man like Avraham or Moshe?

The answer lies in the phrase that says Noach does “exactly as God told him to do.” When Hashem comes to Noach and tells him that He is going to destroy everything and that Noach has to construct an ark to save himself, Noach begins building without questioning.



Continued page 4

Gritzman continued

However, one might wonder what the difference is between chesed and mercy. Chazal explains that kindness is defined as an act of love and care, while mercy is simply doing something because you feel bad for someone else. For example, if I am playing basketball with my friends and I cut my knee, my friends will feel pity for me because they know how it feels to have a bleeding knee. That is mercy. However, if they let me shoot a free throw just to get a smile on my face and for no other reason, that is chesed.

This differentiation helps us understand the *teiva*. Genuine kindness comes from people with an innate love for one another. If everyone shows kindness to one another, then we can easily prevent a moral decline such as the one seen in the generation of the flood. When Hashem commands Noach to build a *teiva*, he is actually laying a strong foundation for Noach to initiate this kindness—through the merit of his righteous acts alone, Noach performed the intrinsically kind act of continuing the human race and salvaging the world!

We must internalize Noach's tremendous act of selflessness and remember that kindness is what defines us as individuals; it is the foundation of our beings and the world. By making a conscious effort to do chesed, even small acts, *you* will be forming the foundation of our world.

Broide continued

When Hashem tells Avraham that He is going to destroy Sodom, Avraham defends the city and its residents. Essentially, Avraham is opposed to Hashem's whole plan. He knows strongly what he believes in, and he fights for it.

The difference between the two is clear. Noach is more like a robot. If Hashem had wanted us to be robots, indifferent and automatic, he could have easily created us like that. Instead, He created us as humans. People with feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Hashem wants us to use our independence and stand up for what we believe is right or wrong, just as Avraham did. Noach simply does not have an opinion, which is inherently a fault.

The word Noach in Hebrew means "rest." Noach takes the easy path: whatever Hashem commands, Noach does, which is great. However, at the same time, it is different than the more difficult path, which Avraham and Moshe took: leading the way forward according to one's own beliefs. That's why the Torah forgets him so quickly.

We should learn from Noach not to be like robots. We must listen to what Hashem wants us to do but also embrace His plans with our own convictions.

Editor-in-Chief

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Editors

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Developers

Saul Len ('16)

Brandon Orlinsky ('16)

Casey Winderbaum ('16)

Ayala Broide ('17)

Layout

Evan Jacoby ('17)

Distribution

Adam Shalloway ('17)

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RAVH@WYHS.NET

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7902 Montoya Circle

Boca Raton, FL 33433

Phone: 561-417-7422

Fax: 561-417-7028

www.wyhs.net