

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT NOACH

Q-1. (a) Why did Hashem (1) call Noach a *tzadik* “in his generations” (4 views)? (2) use water to destroy Noach’s generation (3 reasons)? (3) give him the complicated task of building the ark (3 reasons)? (b) Why was Noach given that name (5 reasons)? (*Bereishit* 6:9,14, 17)

A-1. (a) (1) (i) Noach, righteous in his corrupt generation, would have been more righteous in a moral one; (ii) Noach was righteous compared to his generation – in Avraham’s time he would not have been important (*Rashi*). (iii) Noach, spanning many generations, was righteous in all of them (*Abarbanel*). (iv) Each generation’s righteous are judged in terms of their own time and are placed in each generation based on its needs (*Sefer haParshiot*). (2) (i) The *dor ha-mabul* were arrogant from the plentiful supply of water from rivers and springs Hashem gave them – they did not pray for rain, and He punished them with it; (ii) the generation sinned by opening their *ayin* (eye) to forcibly take all they lusted after – Hashem opened every water *ayin* (fountain) to punish them; (iii) since they sinned with “boiling hot” immorality, boiling water punished them (*Sanhedrin* 108a). (3) (i) The elaborate preparations would cause the people to question why Noach was building the ark, giving them a chance to repent; (ii) Noach was spiritually elevated fulfilling Hashem’s difficult *mitzvah* of building the ark despite the people’s opposition; (iii) since the *tzadik* of each generation is the first to suffer for the generation’s sins, Hashem wanted Noach to hide in the ark while the *Malach haMavet* destroyed everyone (*Bereishit Raba*). (b) (1) After Adam’s sin, men and animals rebelled against him – with Noach’s birth, they “rested” from their rebellion; (2) Until Noach, water rose and flooded the graves of Enosh’s idolatrous generation – with Noach’s birth, the water “rested” (*Bereishit Raba*). (3) Before Noach, people would sow wheat and reap thistles and thorns – with Noach’s birth, they reaped what they had sown, resting from their labors; (4) Noach invented plowing and working tools, allowing people to rest (*Medrash Tanchuma*). (5) *Metushlach*, who foresaw that Noach would “comfort” the world, warned *Lemech* not to call Noach by this name, lest the *dor ha-mabul* curse him with sorcery, which is effective if the correct name is used – *Lemech* publicly called him *Menachem* – “he will comfort us” (*Yalkut Shimon*).

Q-2. Which animals (a) came to the ark on their own? (b) (1) did Noach have to capture? (2) Why? (c) (1) What characteristic made an animal brought to the ark *tahor* (pure) (3 views)? (2) Where do we learn that a person should avoid speaking vulgar language? (3) Why does the *Torah* later use this “vulgar” word? (d) Since *Berachot* 40a says that a man may not eat before he feeds his animals, why did Hashem tell Noach to take a supply of food “for you and for them (the animals),” mentioning Noach before the animals (3 reasons)? (e) (1) Why did Hashem ban Noach, his family and the animals from having marital relations in the ark (5 explanations)? (2) Which 3 violated the prohibition by having relations and how were they punished? (f) Which creatures, besides those in the ark, survived the *mabul*? (*Bereishit* 7:7-22)

A-2. (a) Species that were not *tahor* (non-kosher); (b) (1) the 7 pairs of each *tahor* (kosher) species; (2) since 6 of 7 pairs in the ark would later be slaughtered as *korbanot*, they did not come on their own (*Ramban*). (c) (1) Animals (i) with which no sin had been done (*Zevachim* 116a). (ii) which would later be *kosher* for *Bnei Yisrael* (*Netziv*). (iii) which Noach could bring as *korbanot* (*Sforno*). (2) To avoid the vulgar word “*tamei*” (impure), the *Torah* uses the longer “*lo tehora*” (not pure) to describe the non-kosher animals; (3) the *Torah* later uses the word *tamei* to teach *halachot* and describe *korbanot* – since the *dor ha-mabul* routinely used ugly, repulsive language, Hashem showed the importance of expressing oneself in a refined manner in the context of the *dor ha-mabul* (*Rokeach*). (d) (1) An owner protects his animals for his own benefit and must feed them first, but these animals did not belong to Noach – his *chesed* by saving them entitled him to eat first; (2) Noach had to feed all the animals, which had different feeding schedules throughout the day and night – he would have been unable to eat at all if he had to feed them all first; (3) the ark had enough food because it was blessed through a miracle – a righteous person had to eat first for the blessing to take effect, as *Eliyahu haNavi* did in 1 *Melachim* 17:12 (*Oznayim laTorah*). (e) (1) (i) It was improper while the world was *sharui be-tza’ar* (in distress) (*Rashi*). (ii) Population growth had to be controlled to prevent overcrowding and food shortages (*Malbim*). (iii) Even if one has food, engaging in marital relations during a famine is banned – relations while the world around them was dying was banned (*Ta’anit* 11a). (iv) The ark, like the *Mishkan*, was a holy “tent of Hashem,” where marital relations were improper; (v) children conceived while the world was cursed would be cursed as well (*Zohar*). (2) (i) The dog had relations immodestly and was destined to be “tied” to its mate after relations; (ii) the raven was condemned to spit seed from its mouth to its mate’s mouth; (3) *Cham* had relations with his wife – *Kush* was born in the ark with dark skin; (f) (1) the fish; and (2) *Og*, who promised to be Noach’s offspring’s slave – Noach left a plank outside the ark for him to sit and gave him food (*Sanhedrin* 108b).

Q-3. (a) How long were the *mei ha-mabul* (floodwaters) on the earth? (b) Did it rain down on all of the earth? (c) Since the *mabul* destroyed all vegetation, from where did the dove get the olive leaf that it brought back to the ark? (d) What was the “*ruach*” that Hashem used to stop the water (2 views)? (e) (1) After the *mabul*, where did Noach build an altar? (2) Who else built altars there? (*Bereishit* 8:1,11,14,20)

A-3. (a) One solar year, 365 days – the water began on 17 *Marcheshvan* (7:11), and the earth dried on 27 *Marcheshvan* the following year – the solar year was 11 days longer than 12 lunar months (*Rashi*). (b) No; it did not rain on *Eretz Yisrael* – the water that covered *Eretz Yisrael* flowed in from *Chutz la’Aretz*; (c) *Eretz Yisrael*’s trees were not destroyed – the leaf came from *Har haZeitim* (Mount of Olives) (*Ramban*). (d) (1) After Hashem “remembered” Noach, he caused a spirit of mercy to pass over the world (*Bereishit Raba*). (2) The spirit that hovered over the earth at Creation (1:2), which Hashem used to re-create the world (*Medrash Tanchuma Yashan*). (e) (1) On *Har haMoriah*; (2) (i) Adam; (ii) Kayin and Hevel; (iii) Avraham; (iv) *Shlomo haMelech* (*Ramban* -- *Hilchot Beit haBechirah* 2:2).

Q-4. (a) (1) Which 6 *mitzvot Bnei Noach* (Noahide laws) did *Hashem* command *Adam*? (2) Which *mitzvah* did He command *Noach* after the *mabul*? (b) Why is the rainbow the sign He will never again destroy humanity? (c) Which 2 generations had no rainbows? (*Bereishit* 9:3-17)

A-4. (a) (1) (i) *Dinim* (establishing courts to enforce the other *mitzvot*); the bans on: (ii) *birchat Hashem* (blasphemy), (iii) *avoda zara* (idolatry), (iv) *gilui arayot* (immorality), (v) *shefichat damim* (murder), and (vi) *gezel* (theft); (2) *eiver min ha-chai* (eating a limb of a live animal), since pre-*mabul*, eating all meat was banned (*Sanhedrin* 56a-b). (b) The rainbow resembles a reverse bow, signifying that *Hashem* will aim no more “arrows” at the world to destroy mankind (*Ramban*). (c) In the generations of (1) *Chizkiyahu haMelech* and (2) *Rebi Shimon bar Yochai*, *Bnei Yisrael* were *tzadikim gemurim* (completely righteous) and did not need the sign of the rainbow to protect the world from a *mabul* (*Rashi*).

Q-5. (a) The *Torah* names the nations descended from *Yafet*, saying (10:5), “in their lands, each according to its language, their families, in their nations” – when naming *Cham’s* and *Shem’s* descendants (10:20,31), why does it give a different order, “by their families, their languages, in their lands, in their nations”? (b) (1) What were *Nimrod’s* two other names? (2) What do these 3 names represent? (*Bereishit* 10:2,8-9,20-31)

A-5. (a) *Yafet’s* offspring, settling in the islands (10:5) and separated from others, were nations via common land, developing common language and families – *Shem* and *Cham* lived on one land mass, first developing families and separate languages, then land boundaries (*Oznayim laTorah*). (b) (1) *Amrafel* and *Cush*; (2) (i) *Nimrod* means “caused rebellion” -- he persuaded others to rebel against *Hashem*; (ii) *Amrafel* means “he who cast *Avraham* into the cauldron” from which *Hashem* saved him; (iii) “*Cush*” designated that *Nimrod* was his offspring (*Bereshit Raba*).

Q-6. (a) (1) Before the construction of the *Migdal Bavel* (Tower of Babel), what was the *safa achat* (one language) spoken in the whole world? (2) How do we know this (2 explanations)? (b) What was the goal of each of the 3 groups who combined to build the *midgal*, and how did *Hashem* punish each group? (c) How old was *Avraham* when *Noach* died? (*Bereishit* 11:1-9,26)

A-6. (a) (1) *Leshon ha-kodesh* (the holy tongue - Hebrew) (*Rashi*). (2) (i) *Adam* called his wife *isha* from the word *ish* (*Bereishit* 2:23), showing that he spoke Hebrew – the *safa achat* must have been Hebrew (*Siftay Chachamim*). (ii) The *gematria* of “*safa achat*” is the same as “*leshon ha-kodesh*” (*Ba’al haTurim*). (b) A group wanted (1) to live on top of the *midgal* so the water would not reach them in case of another *mabul* – *Hashem* scattered them across the world; (2) to “make themselves a name” by worshipping idols atop the *midgal* – *Hashem* confused them with different languages; (3) to wage war against *Hashem* – He transformed them into monkeys and demons (*Sanhedrin* 109a). (c) 58 years old – *Avraham* was 48 at the *haflaga* (the dispersion of the languages), and *Noach* died 10 years later (*Seder Olam*).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, (a) to what does the *navi* compare the floodwaters of *Noach*? (b) When the *navi* says that *Hashem* “swore” that the floodwaters of *Noach* would never again pass over the earth, with what words did He swear? (*Yeshayahu* 54:9)

A-7. (a) The flood is compared to *Bnei Yisrael’s* suffering in *galut*, the post-flood covenant is compared to the glory of the *geula* (*Radak*). (b) When *Hashem* said twice “*lo osif*” (I will never continue) (*Bereishit* 8:21) – *Shevuot* 36a says that the repetition constituted an oath (*Rashi*).