

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 4 Mar Cheshvan 5779. We recite Kiddush Levana after Maariv tonight if we can enjoy the light of the moon.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 26 Hz) (p. 34 S) (p. 34 Hi) (p. 30 AS)
NOACH נח

Genesis 6:9

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus,
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. The last verse of last week's reading states that Noach found favor in God's eyes. And in today's reading, it says that Noach was righteous. But the Torah does not specify the grace or righteousness of Noach. The Midrash is stymied by all this. We can piece all this together. Noach spent 120 years building the Ark. He cared for the animals, feeding each animal according to its own schedule. As the Midrash states, Hashem gave Noach the wisdom "to distinguish which animal is fed at two o'clock during the day, and which is fed at three o'clock in the middle of the night." The man didn't sleep. He was forever running from animal to animal. And yet our Sages differed as to how righteous Noach actually was. He didn't make an effort to save any other people. Unlike Avraham and Sarah who influenced others to believe in Hashem, Noach did not have that kind of impact on anyone else. Also we should note that after the Flood, Noach got drunk and embarrassed himself in front of his family. With a glimpse at the total picture, we see a righteous person with imperfections.

2. There are Midrashim that fabricate a story line that are immensely challenging. One Midrash states that Og, the later king of Bashan, held on to the top of the Ark for the duration of the Flood. This is echoed in the statement in the Torah when the Five Kings fought the Four Kings and captured Lot. The "refugee" came to inform Avraham. Og was that refugee. Rashi offers the more literal interpretation that Og was the refugee who survived the big war. Rashi then adds the Midrash that states that Og was the sole refugee from experiencing the Flood.

Another mysterious Midrash is the one that states that Haman took a plank from Noach's Ark to use to hang Mordechai. He brought it home with joyful song and prepared it on his doorstep. The Oznaim LaTorah explains that Haman wanted to de-emphasize the merit of our forefathers and argued: "All men are descendants of the righteous Noach, who found grace with God and was spared so he could build a new world. Why, then, are the Jews setting themselves above the other nations?"

3. "...And the flesh that moves upon the earth expired—among the birds, the cattle, the beasts, and all the things that creep among the earth, and all mankind."(7:21) The Torah seems to list their deaths in the Flood according to the sequence of Creation: birds, cattle, creeping things, and finally, man. Fish, created first, are not mentioned, because the Flood spared them. Another explanation for this order: although all flesh became corrupt, the principle sinner was man, because in his moral decline, he drew all things down

with him. So his punishment was greater than theirs. As Rashi explains: "They sank to the bottom like a stone" (Shemot 15:5) means that (at the Red Sea) the wicked Egyptians like straws, wildly rising and falling; the mediocre sank like stones and the righteous like lead, dying immediately. Just so here. The fish were not condemned at all. The birds, created from swamp, hence similar to the fish, died quickly. Afterward came the cattle, beasts, and creeping things, who were spiritually mediocre. Man, the principle evildoer, died last, rising and falling like straw. (Oznaim LaTorah) [RED's note: Interestingly, in Egypt, the righteous Egyptians died. When the Divine Destroyer is unleashed, he does destroy without differentiating who is evil and who is righteous.]

4. Three times in the text does the Torah bless Noach to be fruitful and multiply (8:16-17. 9:1. and 9:7). It seems that Noach and his family needed the blessing to quickly repopulate the world. Normally the animal world has a much higher birth rate than humans. That is normal and necessary as man (and other animals, too) hunt them, thinning out their numbers. Man has a normal lower birth rate because no one hunts us. Noach and his family did experience a much higher birth rate, creating complete nations in a short period of time. The Jewish rate of reproduction is relatively smaller than the rest of mankind, preserving Hashem's statement in Devarim that we are a smaller nation. It raises the question as to how to equate our small numbers with the Torah's blessing that the Jewish population shall be as the number of sand by the sea. The latter statement has to be understood in a total historical picture. Ancient peoples (Romans, Greeks, Egyptians et al) are gone. The Jewish people continues to survive over thousands of years. Hence our numbers, spanning the course of time, is very large. (RED) [Additional note: In 1939, the total world Jewish population was 18 million people. Then came the Holocaust. Today we number some 14 million. In over 70 years, we have failed to make up for our losses.]

HAFTORAH

(p. 41 Hz) (p. 56 S) (p. 823 Hi) (p. 1131 AS)
ISAIAH ישעיהו 54:1

The exile of the Jewish people from Israel is compared to the "waters of Noach," i.e. the Great Flood that came about in his time. The Talmud compares the consolation to God's oath never again to bring about a flood of such world-destroying proportions. Just as God swore never to bring about such a flood upon the earth, so did He swear never to exile the Jewish people again after the redemption from the current exile, known as the exile of Edom (Radak). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 99a) states that the Messianic era will last as long as the period from the days of Noach until now, meaning from Noach's time until the redemption. For this period of time, God swore not to destroy the world. Nowhere in Genesis is it mentioned explicitly that God swore never to bring a flood upon the world. The Talmud (Shavuot 31a) derives this oath from God's repeated promise never to destroy the earth. If one repeats a statement, with the intention of swearing, it is deemed an oath.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT NOACH 5779
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

- I. From the Text
 1. How big was Noach's family (who were in the Ark)?
 2. How long did it rain in order to start the Flood? (7:4)
 3. How old was Noach when the Flood started? (7:6)
 4. What was the meaning of the word Bavel (Babylonia)? (11:9)
 5. How many generations were there from Noach to Avraham? (11:10-29)
- II. From Rashi
 6. How long did it take Noach to build the Ark? (6:14)
 7. What was the source of light in the Ark? (6:16)
 8. Why was Noach commanded to bring 7 pairs of kosher animals into the Ark? (7:2)
 9. All the people in the world spoke one language. What language was it? (11:1)
 10. How did Haran, Avraham's brother, die? (11:28)
- III. From the Rabbis
 11. Why is the Flood referred to Mei Noach, the waters of Noach, (Isaiah 54)? (Zohar)
 12. What foods were stored in the Ark for the animals to eat?
 13. The Tower of Bavel was built in the Shin'ar valley. In what modern day country was the Tower built?
- IV. From the Haftorah : Isaiah
 14. What did Hashem swear to do with Noach's Flood in the future?
- V. Relationships
 - a) Shem – Asshur
 - b) Cham – Mitzraim
 - c) Yefet – Yavan
 - d) Yefet - Ashkenaz
 - e) Shem – Eiver

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT NOACH 5779

1. Noach, his wife, his 3 sons, and their wives. 8 of them.
 2. 40 days and 40 nights.
 3. 600 years old.
 4. It was there that Hashem "confused" the languages of the earth.
 5. Ten.
 6. 120 years.
 7. It was a Tzohar which some say was a skylight (a window), and some say that it was a precious stone that illuminated the interior of the Ark.
 8. In order to bring sacrifices to Hashem after the Flood.
 9. Hebrew.
 10. When Nimrod threw Avraham into the fiery furnace, Haran said: "If Avraham survives and wins, then I am with him. But if Nimrod wins, I am with him." So Avraham was victorious, and Haran declared his allegiance to him. They threw Haran into the fire, and he died.
 11. It implies that he was responsible for the Flood (because Noach failed to try to influence his generation).
 12. Pressed figs and greens.
 13. Iraq.
 14. That Hashem will never again destroy the earth with a Flood.
- Relationships
- a) Father Shem
 - b) Father Cham
 - c) Father Yefet
 - d) Grandfather Yefet
 - e) Great-Grandfather Shem