

Parshat Noach 5777

This week's sedra is one with which we are all familiar- including the phrase : "Noach Ish Tzaddik"- Noach was a righteous man. What does this mean? The last posuk in Bereishit says that Noach found favour in G-d's eyes. How did he do this? The Ohr Hachaim Hakodesh writes that Noach performed some mitzvahs that caused him to find favour but we are not told what they are. He says the reason for this is so that we don't just do those mitzvahs and no others in order to find favour in G-d's eyes too.

So Noach is a Tzaddik as he is doing mitzvahs and is chosen to be our saviour, whereas everyone else is doing avairas. So the Ohr Hachaim Hakodesh asks why Noach didn't daven for the world? We can see a contrast here between when Hashem wanted to destroy in Avraham's time and during Noach's time. Avraham pleaded with Hashem, negotiating and bargaining with Him. However, Noach did nothing- he may have felt that Hashem had given His decree and that was final; nothing would change it. The command had been issued and perhaps that was why, unlike Avraham who saw some leeway, Noach did not daven. However, Rabbi **Chaim Shmulevitz** quotes a verse in Yeshayahu that turns around this entire perspective. לִי מַי נַחַשׁ זֵאת לִי - "for this is to me as the waters of Noach". Remarkably, he says this is to be Noach's flood because Noach did not daven and was not concerned for the world. He shrugged off his responsibility. Maybe he thought that by having been commanded to be seen openly building the Ark for 120 years , people would realise the truth.

The Midrash says that God specifically wanted Noah to undertake a strange and unusual project, to arouse people's curiosity. God accentuated the oddity of it all by having Noah construct this huge boat — not at the sea shore — but on a mountain-top. Of course nothing could bring the truth home to them until the flood was upon them. This view seems to contradict Hashem's instructions to Noach. However, , **Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz** says that if Noach had really cared he would have davened anyway. When something really bothers you, you implore Hashem. But this did not seem to bother Noach enough to do this.

What was the final straw that brought about the flood? Rashi says that it was the avirah of "gezel." וְתִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס -the land was

corrupted before G-d , and the land was filled with violence.(verse 11.)The word violence, as explained by Rashi as meaning robbery. Violation of private property, lies the essence of the sin for which the race of man was virtually wiped out. The flood was sent on this earth when humanity showed itself to be stripped of human feelings and no man respected any longer the rights and individuality of his fellow. Rashi also relates this to a verse in Yonah as it is said (Yonah 3:8): “and of the dishonest gain (סוּמְרָה) which is in their hands.” - [Sanh. 108a]. "In their hands" indicates that they had stolen goods in their possession. Hashem could not show mercy on a generation that did not care for each other.

The story is told that the great leader of the mussar movement, Rav Yisrael Salanter was on his death bed when he realised that there was someone in his room who was petrified of his impending death. The Rav spent some of his last remaining moments on earth reassuring this person; worrying about another Jew. The generation of the flood did not display this middah and therefore were doomed to die.

In Parshat Naso we learn that the same korban is brought by all the leaders of the tribes. . The Nesi'im, in a demonstration of selflessness and achdut elected to all bring the exact same sacrifices and contributions to the mishkan. Abarbanel explains that for this reason the offerings were brought in six wagons rather than twelve. This meant that two tribes were required to share a wagon in the spirit of "ahava vechiba" love and affection. For this reason, the Torah lists each of their korbanot separately, emphasizing that they each had the same zechut, merit and each deserved to be commended individually for their contribution. We could add that based on the Abarbanel's explanation we can understand why there is a summary of all the korbanot at the end of the perek. Although each Nasi brought his own korban, their intention in bringing the identical offering was to create a sense of achdut. it was Netanel ben Tzaur who decided that after Nachshon ben Aminadav, had brought his korban that there was no point in trying to compete and made the momentous decision to offer the same korban- only an individual who cares enough would do this.

Something to ponder for the coming Shabbat U.k !