

פרשת נח Parshat Noach

Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



DON'T BE JUST A NOACH RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

ARIELLA GREENBERG (22')

SHUEY SILKIN (23')

ZEV KAY (24')

SOPHIA PEARL (24')

This past Wednesday and Thursday was Rosh Chodesh. We celebrated the beginning of the new month, Cheshvan, which many people refer to as Marcheshvan. When we recited

Birkat HaChodesh last Shabbat, we referred to the upcoming month as Marcheshvan. There is in fact a widespread misconception that the official name of the month is Cheshvan and that the prefix “*mar*” -- “bitter” is not part of the real name but instead indicates the bitterness of the month of Cheshvan, which is devoid of any holidays. This would be consistent with the practice of calling the month of Av “*Menachem Av*” as an expression of hope that God will minimize all of the tragedies commemorated

throughout the month of Av.

However, the Rama (Even HaEzer 126:7) rules that the correct name of the month is in fact Marcheshvan and this is the name that should be used when dating documents such as a *ketubah* or a *get*.

In this week’s parsha, the Torah tells us that after the land was destroyed and Noach was on the *teivah*, *וַיָּשָׁאֶר אֲחֵר נֹחַ וְאַשְׁר אָתָּה בְּתַבָּה* – “only Noach and those in the *teivah* remained” (Bereishit 7:23). Rashi comments that the word *אֲחֵר* indicated a minimization, specifically it minimizes Noach’s health because he was injured by the animal he delayed to feed.

I would like to suggest that the word *אֲחֵר* actually minimizes Noach himself, not just his health. He remained “only Noach”, he did not change at all from his experience on the *teivah*. We see this later on: after Noach leaves the *teivah* he immediately gets drunk.

Noach was given an opportunity to grow, change, and potentially inspire others. He failed to do so.

We spent the month of Tishrei making promises and resolutions of how we will start behaving in our relationship with Hashem and our fellow Jews. However, we often end up going back to the same old routine and behaviors.

The month of Marcheshvan is giving us the chance to put our words and thoughts of Tishrei into action. It is “*mar*”, not bitter, but empty. Now is the time to see if all the promises we made will be kept. There are no holidays or major events to help foster the growth we desired in Tishrei. This month requires us to not be “Only Noach”. We need to take the tefillot of Tishrei and apply them to Marcheshvan!

Chodesh Tov and Good Shabbos!

RIGHTEOUS WITH FIRE

ARIELLA GREENBERG (22')

This week's parsha, Parshat Noach, teaches us a valuable lesson about Noach: not in what happened to Noach, but in what didn't happen to him. There are many answers offered as to why Noach did not merit to be the patriarch of the Jewish people. Rav Soloveitchik *zt"l* teaches that “Noach's shortcoming was that he did not pray for his contemporaries destined to die in the flood, since he could not perceive the potential for good within them.” We can contrast this with Avraham, who bargained with Hashem to save the evil inhabitants of Sodom. Noach is called a “*tzadik b'peltz*”, a righteous man in a fur coat because a righteous man who is cold has two choices: putting on a fur coat that will only keep himself warm or lighting a fire that will create warmth for himself and those around him.

Noach chose the former, whereas Avraham and Sarah chose the latter. Avraham and Sarah opened up their tent to anyone willing to learn and be inspired, spreading the warmth of their fire. The Gemara (Shabbat 55a) further illustrates this concept within the context of a different sin. “What did the Elders, i.e., the sages of that generation, do that was considered a sin? Rather, say: God will enter into judgment with the Elders

because they did not protest the sinful conduct of the princes.” When the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, even the righteous sages of the generation were judged as though they had sinned because they did not try to change their environment and instead let everyone else around them doom themselves. Noach assumed that in a doomed generation, the best course of action was to isolate and save himself because he perceived the people around him to be unsavable. Hashem teaches Noach a lesson with the symbol of the rainbow.

Rav Soloveitchik continues his interpretation of Noach's character flaw by explaining that “Noach was shown the rainbow within the cloud to demonstrate that even though it may appear that certain corrupt souls may have no potential for good, this is untrue. God revealed the rainbow to Noach as an object lesson; *within every dark cloud there is a possibility of seeing a rainbow full of color.*” Hashem showed Noach that no matter how bad the situation is, He will always have mercy on us because we have the potential to be better. Noach should have done the same with having faith and trying to help those around him not get destroyed.

We can learn from Parshat Noach to not be a righteous person in a fur coat, but rather be a righteous person with a fire. We often assume that the best way to preserve our righteousness or goodness is to separate ourselves from everyone else. Parshat Noach teaches us that this is not the way to live. Rather than removing ourselves in an effort to stay holy or moral, we can use the good within us and spread it to those around us. When we can see the potential for good in others, we will God-willing be able to have the generosity to share and influence people for the good, rather than isolating ourselves. Have a great Shabbos!

FAITHFUL

SHUEY SILKIN (23')

In this week's parsha, Parshat Noach, Noach builds a large *teivah* for his family and all the animals in the world. In doing so, Noach needed a

lot of food to feed the people and all the animals that were with him. How did Noach manage to fit all the food on the *teivah*? The Gemara Yoma (80a) comments on the phrase, **מְכָל הַאֲכֵל אֲשֶׁר יָאַכֵּל** -- “of all the food that will be eaten,” and explains that the largest food that a human can swallow is the size of a hen’s egg. We can use this gemara to show that Hashem told Noach to portion everything into bite-sized food to sustain those on the *teivah*. Another answer is that Hashem told Noach to bring enough food for himself. Among all the other miracles Hashem performed on the *teivah*, Hashem made the amount of food Noach brought sufficient for everyone else, including all the animals.

Later on the Torah tells us that

וַיַּעֲשֵׂנִי כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה הָ -- “And Noach did all Hashem commanded him to do” (Bereishit 7:5). Why would the Torah need to state this? Noach was a tzaddik; isn’t it obvious that he would follow Hashem? The Torah is praising Noach for how much faith he had in Hashem. Noach entered the *teivah* with enough food for himself and he relied on a miracle from Hashem that it would sustain everyone and everything throughout the flood. We can learn a lesson from this about *hishtadlut* and *bitachon*.

Of course we should put in effort, like how Noach cut the food into bite size pieces or brought enough food for himself to eat. At the same time, believing in Hashem is important. Noach had the balance that we strive to have between human effort and belief in Hashem, which we should ultimately try to emulate.

BE A TZADIK

ZEV KAY (24')

אֱלֹהִים תֹּולְדָת נָמָן אֲשֶׁר צִדִּיק תָּמִים הִיָּה בְּדַרְתַּי אֶת
הַאֲלָקִים הַתְּהִלָּה נָמָן

“This is the story of Noach, Noach was a righteous man in his generation; Noach walked with Hashem” (Bereishit 6:9).

What does it mean that Noach was a tzaddik? Rashi quotes some of our sages, who say that if

Noach had lived in another generation he would have been an even bigger tzaddik than he was in his generation. However, other sages say that Noach was called a tzaddik relative to the people of his generation. It appears that Noach is a simple man surrounded by bad people, which makes him seem like a tzaddik in comparison.

The Yalkut HaDrush gives two answers to support the idea of Noach not being a true tzaddik. The first answer is just like Rashi’s suggestion that he was only a tzaddik compared to the terrible people of his generation. The second answer proves a greater point. The pasuk states that

אֶת הַאֲלָקִים הַתְּהִלָּה נָמָן -- “Noach walked with God.” Doesn’t this seem as if Noach was a true tzaddik?

The Yalkut HaDrush gives the *mashal* of a man who, while in the presence of a minyan, davens with so much *kavana*, but when he davens at home he has no *kavana* and rushes through his davening. When Noach was off the *teivah*, he got drunk from the grapes of his vineyard and laid on the floor unclothed. His children had to cover him to not witness seeing their father like this. This is not the act of a tzaddik. However, when Noach was being watched by God he followed the ways of Hashem. While he might not have been a righteous man, in a generation full of terrible people, he was the one to follow in the footsteps of God.

We should learn to be complete with our service to Hashem, whether inside our home or outside, always serving Hashem in a consistent way.

STAY FOCUSED

SOPHIA PEARL (24')

In this week’s parsha, Parshat Noach, the Torah says

אֱלֹהִים תֹּולְדָת נָמָן אֲשֶׁר צִדִּיק תָּמִים הִיָּה בְּדַרְתַּי אֶת
הַאֲלָקִים הַתְּהִלָּה נָמָן

“These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a completely righteous man in his generation, and Noach walked with God” (Bereishit 6:9). Noach was surrounded by corruption and evil. During this time Hashem mentions how He re-

gretted making mankind with free choice because of how society was acting. Hashem wanted to recreate the world and wipe out all the people, but because Noach and his family were so righteous God decided against destroying all the people.

The big question is how was Noach able to remain untouched and keep his values while being surrounded by all the corruption around him? Similarly today, people are negatively influenced by their friends and surroundings so easily. One friend makes a bad choice then encourages you and your friends to make the same bad choice. So we can relate to Noach in the sense of how hard it is to remain true to yourself and not allow those around you to negatively influence you. How did he do it?

One possible solution to this question regarding how Noach was able to remain a tzadik can be found in the mishna in pirkei avot (4:2) where it tells us:

שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועבירה גוררת עבירה

-- “a mitzvah generates another mitzvah and an aveira causes another aveira.” When the people around you are doing something good, you will probably do that same good thing. Alternatively, if the people around you are doing bad things, then you will probably also be doing these bad things. This idea shows how crazy and holy Noach was in order to be different and restrain himself from the rest of society. We see that Noach must have kept doing “tzaddik things” which prevented him from getting influenced by those around him.

Another answer given is that the name Noach means calmness. Noach exemplified the meaning of his name; he was calm, in control, remained strong in his beliefs, and did not react to the society around him. This calmness showed how strong Noach was himself.

As we live life, we live with the illusion that we are unaffected by the culture around us. This is not true; most people are influenced by those around them. How does someone attain true independence? Noach wasn’t looking to directly influence the people of his generation. Noach took care of himself and followed his true values. He was uninfluenced by the people surrounding him and, as the pasuk says, Noach walked with Hashem. That was the legacy and power of Noach.

We can learn from Noach to take this message that we can remain true to ourselves and not allow society to influence us.

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