

Noah and the Flood

אָלָה תּוֹלְדֵת נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלְק־נֹחַ: Gen 6:9:

This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God.—

Rashi

IN HIS GENERATIONS — Some of our Rabbis explain it (this word) to his credit: he was righteous even in his generation; it follows that had he lived in a generation of righteous people he would have been even more righteous owing to the force of good example. Others, however, explain it to his discredit: in comparison with his own generation he was accounted righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Abraham he would have been accounted as of no importance (cf. Sanhedrin 108a).

Rashi: NOAH WALKED WITH GOD — In the case of Abraham Scripture says, (Genesis 24:40) אֲשֶׁר־הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי לְפָנָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק...: God¹ replied to me, “[God] before whom I walked”;

Noah needed God’s support to uphold him in righteousness, Abraham drew his moral strength from himself and walked in his righteousness by his own effort (Genesis Rabbah 30:10).

"Make thee an ark of cedarwood" (So Targum Onkelos; JV: "of gopher wood.") (Gen. 6:14). R. Huna said in the name of R. Yose: For one hundred and twenty years, the Holy One kept warning the generation of the flood in the hope that they would resolve to repent. When they did not repent, He said to Noah, "Make thee an ark of cedarwood." Noah proceeded to plant cedars. When asked, "Why these cedars?" he would reply, "The Holy One is about to bring a flood upon the world, and He told me to make an ark, that I and my family might escape." They mocked and ridiculed him. In the meantime, he watered the cedars, which kept growing. When asked again, "What are you doing?" he gave them the same reply, and the generation of the flood continued to ridicule him. Finally, he cut the cedars down, and, as he sawed them into planks, he was again asked, "What are you doing?" He replied, "What I said I would do," even as he continued to warn the generation of the flood. When they did not repent even then, the Holy One brought the flood upon them. At last, when they realized that they were about to perish, they tried to overturn the ark. What did the Holy One do then? He surrounded the ark with lions. (**Tanhuma, Noah,-5**)

Another take on same question: MAKE THEE AN ARK — There are numerous ways by which God could have saved Noah; why, then, did he burden him with this construction of the Ark? So that the men of the generation

of the Flood might see him employed on it for 120 years and might ask him, "What do you need this for"? and so that he might answer them, "The Holy One, blessed be He, is about to bring a flood upon the world" — perhaps they might repent (Sanhedrin 108b). **Rashi on Genesis 6:14:1**

R. Levi taught: When the Holy One said to Noah, "Gather unto thee two living creatures of every kind into the ark," all the creatures came and each of them entered the ark with his mate. Falsehood also came and wished to enter, but Noah said, "You cannot enter unless you wed a proper mate." So Falsehood went looking for a mate and encountered Vexation. Vexation asked, "Where are you coming from?" Falsehood replied, "From Noah. I wanted to enter the ark, but he would not allow me to do so unless I had a proper mate with me. Would you be willing to be my mate?" Vexation asked, "What will you give me?" Falsehood replied, "I pledge you that all that I may lay by, you shall take." [Vexation agreed to Falsehood's proposal] and they both entered the ark. After they left the ark, Falsehood went about laying things by, and Vexation took them, one by one. When Falsehood came and inquired, "Where are all the things I laid by?" Vexation replied, "Was it not agreed between us that I would take everything you might lay by?" Falsehood had nothing more to say. "Yea, Vexation has become heavy with what Falsehood has brought forth" (Ps. 7:15). (JV: "Yea, he conceiveth mischief, and bringeth forth falsehood.") As the proverb puts it: What falsehood begets, vexation takes over.

(MTeh 7:11; Yalkut, Noah,-56)

"A light (*tzohar*) shalt thou make for the ark" (Gen. 6:16). R. Levi said: *Tzohar* means a pearl of purest ray.

Throughout the twelve [months](#) that Noah was in the ark, he had no need of the light of the sun by day, nor of the light of the moon by night. For he had a pearl which he hung up: while it was dim, he knew that it was day, and while it glowed, he knew that it was night. **(Gen. R. 31:11)**

"And he sent forth a raven, and it went forth to and fro" (Gen. 8:7). It to-and-fro'ed, (In the play on words, *shov* ("return") is associated with *hashev*, ("retort"). Gen. R. 33:5) argued with him, saying: Of all the cattle, beasts, and fowl you have here, you send none but me! Noah replied: What need has the world of you? You are fit neither for food nor as an offering.

Then, said Resh Lakish, the raven gave Noah an irrefutable retort: Your Lord hates me and you hate me. Your Lord showed His hatred of me by ordering that seven pair of the clean fowl be taken into the ark, but only two pair of the unclean. And you hate me, seeing that you spare the species of which there are seven pair, but from the species of which there are only two pair, you send me.

Should the prince of heat or the prince of cold smite me, might not the world lose one entire species of creature?

Nevertheless, "Noah did send out the raven" (Gen. 8:7) to learn what was going on in the world. The raven flew out and, finding a man's corpse flung on a mountaintop, perched itself over this food and did not come back to its sender with word concerning its errand. Then Noah sent out the dove, and she did bring back word. "And lo, in her mouth an olive leaf freshly plucked" (Gen. 8:11).

From where did the dove bring it? R. Bebai said: The gates of the Garden of Eden were opened for her, and she brought it from there.

R. Aibu said to him: Had she brought it from the Garden of Eden, would she not have brought something finer, such as a stick of cinnamon or a leaf of balsam? But in truth the dove's olive leaf was a way of hinting to Noah: My master Noah, I would rather have something even more bitter than this from the hand of the Holy One than something sweet from your hand. (**Gen. R. 33:6; Lev. R. 31:10; Song R. 1:15,-4; Yalkut, Noah,-58**)

"And Noah the tiller of the soil became profane" : **וַיִּטֵּעַ כְּרָם:** נִיָּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטֵּעַ כְּרָם:

Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. (EV: "And Noah the tiller of the soil began . . . ")

All three from (Gen. 9:20).

But since the verb in Hebrew is placed at the opening of the verse, suggesting special emphasis, the commentator understands it as stemming not from *hvl* [*hul*] ("begin") but from *hll* ("profane") He profaned himself and became profane. How did he bring this about? Scripture says, "And planted a vineyard" (ibid.).

Should he not have planted something of use, say a young fig shoot or an olive shoot? But no--he "planted a vineyard."

But where did he get the grapevines? R. Abba bar Kahana said: He had taken some vine tendrils into the ark with him, as well as fig saplings and olive saplings.

As he set about to plant the vineyard, the demon Shamdon met him and suggested: Take me into partnership. But beware, do not trespass into my part. If you do, I will hurt you. [A demon named Shamdon went with Noah to plant the vineyard and made a condition with him (Noah) not to interfere in any way with his work, or he would injure him.]

(Gen. R. 36:3 and 31:14)

When Noah began planting, Satan came, stationed himself before him, and asked, "What are you planting?" Noah: "A vineyard." Satan: "What is its nature?" Noah: "Its fruit, whether fresh or dried, is sweet, and from it one makes wine, which gladdens a man's heart." Satan: "Will you agree to let both of us plant it together?" Noah: "Very well." What did Satan do? He brought a ewe lamb and slaughtered it over a vine. After that, he brought a lion, which he likewise slaughtered. Then a monkey, which he also slaughtered over it. Finally a pig, which he again slaughtered over that vine. And with the blood that dripped from them, he watered the vineyard.

The charade was Satan's way of saying that when a man drinks one cup of wine, he acts like a ewe lamb, humble and meek. When he drinks two, he immediately believes himself to be as strong as a lion and proceeds to brag mightily, saying, "Who is like me?" When he drinks three or four cups, he immediately becomes like a monkey, hopping about giggling, and uttering obscenities in public, without realizing what he is doing. Finally, when he becomes blind drunk, he is like a pig, wallowing in mire and coming to rest among refuse. All the above befell Noah.

(Tanhuma, Noah,-13)
