

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

OCTOBER 21, 2017

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of R' Moshe Chaim Berkowitz, Moshe Chaim Ben Avraham Aba. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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1 CHESHVAN

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS NOACH

## It's Not About You

*These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G-d. Noach gave birth to three sons: Shem, Cham and Yefes (6:9-10).*

Rashi in his comments on this *possuk* quotes the Midrash; "To teach you that the primary "offspring" of the righteous are good deeds" (see Rashi ad loc and *Midrash Rabbah* 30:6). In other words, our sages are bothered by the structure of the verses; the first verse begins with the introduction of "these are the offspring of Noach" and then goes on to describe how righteous Noach was instead of telling us who his children were. From here, Chazal conclude that the fundamental "offspring" of a *tzaddik* are his good deeds.

Maharal (see Gur Aryeh ad loc) elaborates on this Chazal: "There are three partners in the creation of a child; the man, the woman and, most importantly, Hashem. On the other hand, a person's deeds are solely his own. Therefore the primary offspring of someone are his good deeds."

Yet, if this is the basis for the Midrash, why did Chazal teach us that the "primary offspring of the **righteous** are their good deeds;" the fundamental offspring of **every person** should be their good deeds!

Most people focus on their own existence with their lives primarily revolving around themselves and their needs. At the same time, they have an innate sense that they are a perishable product (i.e. they have an "expiration date"). There are a couple of ways that people respond to these instincts: Some constantly seek pleasure, knowing that this "ride" will at some

point come to an end. Others seek to connect to something outside of themselves and expand their existence by loving others and being loved.

This is the motivation for most people to have children. They want to connect to something outside of themselves; to give and receive love and to see themselves continue on, even after they are no longer physically here on earth. Having children, who are similar to oneself in so many ways, is a very palpable and satisfying way of perpetuating one's existence.

In contrast, those who are truly righteous do not focus on their own existence or their narrow needs. They have internalized that they are living in a theocentric world and that their primary objective is to forward Hashem's agenda for the world. Their good deeds actually serve to define who they are, and therefore become an absolute reflection of themselves. Their good deeds reflect their righteousness.

Of course, righteous people desire children as well. However, they recognize that their fundamental reason for existence is not to figure out how to perpetuate themselves, but rather what they themselves can do to perfect the world. Maharal (ad loc) actually points out that in this manner the good deeds of the righteous actually serve to give birth to them; because that is a perfect definition of who they are.



### Did You Know...

- The only person in the Torah to be called a *tzaddik* is Noach. It is remarkable; the only person to be referred to as a *tzaddik* in the entire Torah is a non-Jew!
- Most people do not realize that Avraham Avinu and Noach were actually alive at the same time. Avraham was 58 when Noach passed away. Interestingly, the Gematria (numerical value) of Noach is 58.
- After the Flood, Hashem promised that he would never revisit upon the world another flood. The sign for this "covenant" is a rainbow. Why a rainbow? One of the words for rain in Hebrew is "yoreh" (we say it every day in the *Shema*). *Yoreh* also means to shoot a projectile – in other words, raindrops are projectiles from above. Just as an archer who finishes shooting his arrows slings his bow back over his shoulder, turning it away from his target, a rainbow represents Hashem turning His "aim" away from the earth.

# East of Eden

***Then Hashem said to Noach, “Come to the ark, you and your entire household, for it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. From the pure animals take for yourself seven by seven a male and its mate...” (7:1-2)***

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 34:9) explains that Hashem commanded Noach to take from the “pure” (i.e. kosher) animals more than he took from the rest of the animals in order to bring them as sacrifices. In other words, from all the animals in the world Noach took in only a single pair, but from some of the kosher animals he took into the *teivah* seven pairs (although according to some, Noach brought a total of seven from the kosher animals – four males and three females).

The *teivah* wasn't a pleasant place to be, it was crowded and smelly and mostly dark. In addition, Noach and his sons were constantly on call to feed and care for all of the animals (compounding this misery was the fact that animals eat at different times of the day and night). Rashi (7:23) comments that Noach actually was coughing up blood from the stress of caring for the animals. In fact, according to the Midrash (*Tanchuma Parshas Noach*) Noach was so miserable that he *davened* to Hashem to shorten the time necessary to be on the ark (he was turned down).

Seeing as this was the case, why did Hashem tell Noach to bring even more animals into the ark (the extra kosher ones that were to be brought as sacrifices)? Surely Noach, who lived for over three hundred years after the Great Flood, could have waited a decade or two for the animals to give birth and build large herds. At that time, he would have had plenty of the kosher animals on hand from which to sacrifice. Why did Hashem ask him to bring them on to the *teivah*?

Hashem was giving Noach and his children an important message. Even though Hashem had decreed that the world had to be destroyed because mankind had totally perverted it, Hashem still desired a relationship with man. Hashem wanted Noach and his children to be able to offer sacrifices immediately after leaving the *teivah* in order to begin to reconnect and repair His relationship with mankind.

This would also explain Noach's seemingly outrageous behavior of making it a priority to build a vineyard upon exiting the ark. Bal Haturim comments on the verse “and Noach,

*man of the earth, set out to plant a vineyard” (9:20)*, that Noach actually planted what he had taken from the Garden of Eden – according to one opinion in the Gemara (*Brachos* 40a) the tree of knowledge was a grapevine – because Noach thought that he was to replicate the Garden of Eden.

In other words, Noach misunderstood Hashem's desire for a relationship with mankind. Noach thought that once he came out of the ark he and his children would be back at the level of Adam prior to the original sin and that they would be welcomed back to the Garden of Eden, so he took the vines that he had brought into the ark and planted them to begin that process.

However, in reality, Hashem was giving him a more powerful message. Hashem was letting him know that He desired to have a relationship with us even in our world, outside of the Garden. Hashem did not want him to have to wait many decades in order to bring sacrifices, He wanted Noach to open the lines of communication right away upon leaving the ark.

## Did You Know Continued

- Until this week's *parsha*, man was commanded to be vegan; it was prohibited to kill animals for food. In this week's *parsha*, Hashem grants mankind permission to kill animals for food (see *Rashi* 9:3).
- Noach took ALL living creatures into the ark, including demons (see *Rashi* 6:19).

*In tribute to the tenth Yahrzeit of Binyamin (Barry) Ross OBM, and as continuing Zechus for R' Binyomin Yitzchak Ben Meir Z'L, the Ross family is sponsoring a free class every week for the entire year.*

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