

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Noach 5784

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The world has descended to sin and needs a resent.

**אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים הִתְהַלְּךְ־נֹחַ:**

“These are the legacies of Noach: Noach was a righteous man; pure he was in his generation. The Lord guided Noach.” (Bereishis 6:9).

Like all neviim, prophets or seers, those that experience prophecy, Noach is a complicated man. The pasuk lays out who he is and who he is not. A contextual reading shows his greatness and why Hashem chose him. Who was he and why was he chosen?

Famously, the Gemara Sanhedrin (Bavli 108a) has a dispute to know if Noach was righteous compared to his generation or he was righteous in his own right. Taking it as a comparison of who was greater, Avraham or Noach is taking the Gemara out of context. The dispute is really about how one should live and impact his generation. Should a person be a Noach or an Avraham? We will explain.

Whenever the Torah says אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת “these are the offsprings” (lit.) it means “these are the legacies.” “These are the legacies of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day Hashem the Lord made them.” (Ibid 2:4). The heavens and earth have no progeny but they do have a legacy, and their legacy is that Hashem created them with the name of Hashem and Elokim. Similarly, “these are the legacies of the children of Noach, Shem, Cham, and Yafes, and was born to them many children after the deluge.” (Ibid 10:1). Their collective legacy was their offspring that renewed the world after the deluge. The main legacy of Shem was his own line. (Ibid 11:10). And so, it goes throughout the Torah.

Of course, when talking about legacy, it means toward the end-goal of the Torah’s purpose. That purpose is Bnei Yisroel entering Eretz Yisroel. Every “legacy” given in the Torah is in direct relationship to the history and destiny of Bnei Yisroel. Taken this way, read our pasuk as saying, “These are the legacies of Noach, Noach.” Noach was his own legacy. The best thing that he was able to produce was himself. This is in two ways. First, he made himself a man (important) and righteous (worthy) and was pure of motive in his generation. He wanted what was best for his generation. Secondly, he was the eldest of the eldest of the eldest, and thus, Adam’s heir. Adam’s inheritance line went from Shes to Enosh, and then down to Keinan, Mahalaleil, Yared, Chanoch, Mesushalach, to Lamech. (Ibid 5:3-25). Lamech was one hundred eighty-two years when he had a son. (Ibid 5:28).

There was a third and important reason that Noach’s legacy was “Noach.” Instead of saying Lamech begot Noach it says “a son.” Then it continues: וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לְאָמֵר הָיָה: “And he called his name Noach, saying, ‘This one will provide comfort from our work and toil of our hands, from the ground that was

cursed by Hashem.” ((Ibid 5:29). Curiously, the ten-generation lineage is paused by Lamech—the ninth generation—and an explanation is then given for the tenth—Noach. Not only was he the heir but he was named after a special hope and prophecy (or he was renamed for what he did). The correct reading of the Torah is that Lamech had a son—regardless of his name. He was an heir, obviously. However, he was more.

This “son” was called Noach due to his great efforts in helping his generation work the ground with greater ease. That can be through the invention of the plow and farming equipment, or his farming methods, or just by him being righteous and the ground being eased from its curse because of his merit. He also ended up saving much of the world, the local seeds and animal species, along with his children—who we learned were very fecund. In that way he “saved the ground that was cursed.”

When Hashem destined the deluge, the Torah says, וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱמֹקָה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרֵאתִי, מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתֶם: “And Hashem said, I will blot out man that I created from upon the face of the ground, from man to beast to crawling creatures to birdlife, because I need comfort that I made them.” (Ibid 6:7). The Torah uses the word adama - ground. The curse that Noach saved “Adam” from was the deluge. He saved mankind but he also saved Adam’s line (read it both ways).

This is who Noach was and this is why he is his own legacy. Noach’s greatest legacy was Noach—the man named for giving comfort to Hashem and to mankind. He saved mankind from the curse of the ground and thus, earned the name Noach. His legacy was his name—Noach.

He was a man. Ish means man of importance. “And an ish - man from the House of Levi...” (Shmos 2:1. See also 2:11). “Also, the man Moshe was very great in the Land of Mitzrayim.” (Ibid 11:3). Noach was an Ish, a man of importance and substance. He was an heir but he earned himself stature in his own right.

He was also righteous. He was pure in his generation. This is not qualifying his purity. He being a man and righteous already stands on its own. His purity in his generation is that despite their failings, he remained simple and whole. Hashem call Himself “tamim.” (Bereishis 17:1). Korbanos are required to be “tamim.” (Vayikra 3:6, 4:3). Moshe teaches, “Wholehearted you must be with Hashem your Lord.” (Devarim 18:13). This follows the warning not to do anything abhorrent תועבה to Hashem. (Ibid 18:12). Noach was opposite of his generation. While they were corrupting themselves (Bereishis 6:5,11) Noach was pure.

Further, “the Lord walked before Noach.” This means that Noach made himself subservient to the attribute of “the Lord,” the Creator and the dealer of the mundane. Unlike his generation that tried to make themselves rulers and lords (Ibid 6:4) Noach humbled himself and followed the Lord. He did what was best for the world and not what was best for himself. In this way, he was the right man to save the world.

As for Noach and Avraham, the world has room for and needs both. Noach (quietly impactful) was perfect to save the world from destruction. Avraham (outwardly a spreader of love and knowledge of Hashem) was needed to propel the promise of the world toward Torah. Each were the right man at the right time.