

## A PARASHA THOUGHT

### How to Become a Tzaddik

As soon as one begins the *parasha* he is hit by a very perplexing question. The *pasuk* says that Noach was a *tzaddik*, a wholesome person in his generation. Rashi addresses on this *lashon* (wording) of "in his generation" and explains that there is a *machlokes* (disagreement) about what this is coming to tell us.

Some explain that this is coming to relate the praise of Noach that he was a *tzaddik* even among his lowly generation and all the more so if he would have been in a greater generation. However some learn it to his detriment, saying that only in his generation was he a *tzaddik*, but if he would have lived in the

RABBI  
MOSHE  
GERCHIKOV



times of Avraham, then he wouldn't have been considered a *tzaddik* at all. This second opinion is very bothersome. What in the world is the Torah coming to tell us with this information? As Rashi said right before, the Torah at this point is sharing the praises of Noach, so why lower the praise to say that he wasn't so great after all?

Rav Pam answers this question beautifully

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## LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL

WITH  
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

The Gemara (*Avodah Zara* 2b–3a) relates that when Hashem saw that Noach's descendants were not observing their seven *mitzvahs*, He permitted those prohibitions to them. The Gemara asks, "Should the sinner benefit?" How could sin free them from punishment and responsibility? The Gemara ultimately explains that this means that even when they are complying, they would no longer receive the full reward that is due to those who fulfill commandments.

The Pnei Yehoshua (*Teshuvos*: YD 1:3, EH 2:43), in an approach that is unique among the commentators, understands this conclusion to mean that they are, in fact, no longer punished for violating these *mitzvahs*; nevertheless, this is not considered a benefit in the end, when compared to the loss of reward that they stood to gain had they remained obligated. (This perhaps is the intent of Rashi as well.) The consensus of the other commentators, however, is that these nations are still held accountable for these *mitzvahs*, as the Gemara argued. This is difficult to understand. If they are still held responsible then this means that they are still obligated; if so, why would they not receive the reward as such?

Nachlas Moshe (*Baba Kama* 38a) explains, in line with the comments

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of Tosofos, that being commanded creates a natural resistance, since one feels the pressure of being compelled, which makes it more difficult to perform. This adds to the reward for fulfilling *mitzvohs*. As Ben Hei Hei said in *Avos* (5:26), the reward is in proportion to the exertion. Since the nations have consistently demonstrated their comfort in violating these *mitzvohs*, they apparently do not feel compelled at all to perform them; they feel no pressure. Without this pressure and added difficulty, their reward is reduced when they do fulfill them.

The Netziv (*Meromei Sadeh*, *ibid.*) explains this differently. *Mitzvohs*, he says, naturally bring positive consequences when observed and negative consequences when violated. This remains true for the nations, as well. On a deeper level, however, our fidelity to Hashem's will through the *mitzvohs* connects us to Him and fosters a relationship that brings His *Hashgacha Pratis* (Divine Providence) and protection. These far greater rewards are now beyond the reach of the nations that rejected the seven *mitzvohs* of Noach and showed no interest in a relationship with Hashem. 🕒

## A PARASHA THOUGHT

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with a lesson that inspires me every day. He says that even this opinion is praising of Noach. The second interpretation is bringing out that even though compared to Avraham he wasn't so great, he is still considered to be a *tzaddik* based on the time that he lived in. The *pasuk* is saying that Noach withstood the trials of his *dor* (generation) and is therefore given the status of greatness. The Nesivos Shalom brings out this idea even more. He brings a Zohar that the *tafkid* (purpose) of the *dor* of Noach was *yirah* – to fear Hashem. Every *dor* has its own *tafkid*, and Noach worked on that aspect to become the *tzaddik* that he was.

This is a big *chizuk* (source of encouragement) to every Jew in *Klal Yisrael*. Even

if we don't match up to the greatness of the earlier generations, that doesn't matter. Every Jew has his or her own purpose and every moment has its potential that is waiting to be brought out for its *cheilek* in the world. As we go through our day to day lives during the winter, our goal is to take each moment and utilize it for its purpose to serve Hashem in the unique way which is reserved for us. If we're able to focus on that, then each and every person will be able to achieve that status for themselves and become a great *tzaddik* like Noach was able to do. 🕒



## TRIVIA

RABBI GAVI KADISH

There are various things that our sages teach us that cause one to forget their learning. One of them is based upon an incident in this week's *parasha*. What is it?

Towards the end of the *parasha* (11:1) the Torah recounts the infamous story of the tower of Babel. Nimrod and his people planned on building a tower ascending to heaven and to wage war with Hashem. Obviously, their plans proved to be futile, and Hashem destroyed the unity which enabled them to initially stage the rebellion. The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 109a states that one third of the tower was burnt, the next third was swallowed by the ground, and the final third is still standing. Rav comments that one who sees the "*avir*" or airspace of the tower of Babel forgets his learning. Rashi explains that the Gemara is referring to one who stands next to the tower, looks up, and still sees the airspace of the tower. Mahrsha explains that even standing in the area where the shadow of the tower would have cast its shadow had it not sunk and burnt warrants forgetting one's learning. Why does this tower possess the power to cause one to forget one's learning? Hashem ensured that the tower would crumble through having the people forget their common language. Consequently, Hashem endowed the area with the ability to cause forgetfulness until this very day. 🕒