

Parshas Noach

In the second Aliyah of the Parsha, Noach enters the Teiva because the storm that will bring about the flood began. Rashi explains that even Noach had doubts about whether the storm would happen, and only once the rain started did Noach enter the Teiva. Rashi on, “because of the waters of the flood” (7:7), explains as translated that Noach had little faith that the rain would arrive. Does this make sense? Didn’t Noach spend the last few hundred years building the Teiva? Didn’t the posuk comment on his righteousness and that he listened to the word of Hashem?

If you research different locations where the word מקטני is used. Generally, it denotes diminished or minor, which aligns with the simple translation of Rashi here- that is, Noach has diminished faith. But in places like Sotah 49b, the word מקטני is used to describe a diminished people (specifically Chassidim talking about the reduced number of pious people after אבא יוסי בן קטונתא passed away.) So, if we reread Rashi, it's saying he was one of the few people in that epoch who had Emunah. He did believe the rain would come (which is why he built the Teiva, and earlier Rashi explained that the long process of making the Teiva was to illicit a repentance response from his generation- but the opposite took place), and perhaps because of his righteousness, he thought the people of the era would repent and that the rain would not have to come. So it wasn't that Noach didn't believe the rain wouldn't come and that he'd have to be compelled to enter the ark; perhaps, he felt that until the rain of the Mabul came, there was hope that people would change. Rashi concludes ולא נכנס לתבה עד

שדחקהו המים- that he didn't enter the Teiva until the water got so bad which meant that the Mabul was upon the generation and the irreversible calamity would happen and it wasn't just raining. Even for the worst people, Noach had hoped they would turn around, and even with all his preparation, perhaps through repentance of the people, the Mabul wouldn't need to come and stave off the massive calamity that would befall the world.

There are multiple Mefharshim (such as the Kedushas Levi and others) regarding Noach's lack of prayers on behalf of the generation to prevent the deluge from arriving. According to some opinions, although Noach was righteous, he was looking out for himself and not actively trying to change the world around him (a passive pursuit of faith versus an active pursuit of faith). Some say he didn't believe (because of his humility) that he had the power to change the world around him.

As we know, Noach didn't intervene enough, and the world then needed a reset. Hashem brought the calamity down to reset the world due to an arrogant attitude. Baal Haturim explained that the abundantly wealthy generation became distant from Hashem and acted heinous ways. On the other hand, Noach remained steadfast and loyal to Hashem, hence his salvation, but the world around him was destroyed. Noach isn't blamed for the Mabul, but we are taught that righteousness, prayer and good deeds (such as learning the Torah) change the world around us and that we can actively spread goodness even in a dark world.

According to a prophecy explained in Zohar on 7:11, “the wellsprings of the depths burst forth, and the heavens opened” (בִּבְקֻעוֹ כָּל־מַעְיֵנֹת תְּהוֹמוֹ רָבָה וְאַרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם) (נִפְתָּחוּ) that in the year 5600 (~1840) there will be an opening of knowledge both on the spiritual and scientific fronts, which will be the point at which we usher in the era of Mashiach. What is unfolding in Eretz Yisrael is unprecedented for our generation. The global reaction and the relationship between Jews and their surroundings are precarious. These things happen to us, as explained in Midrash on the Parsha; just as a craftsman tests his wares to show their might or a flax maker beats the flax to make it stronger, so too does the chosen nation of Hashem gets continually beaten, which shows our strength and our superior place in this world. What better representation of righteousness (tzidkis) than our nation’s reaction to the losses we experienced in Israel? “Mi K’amcha Yisroel?” The outpouring of love and kindness is unbelievable. Instead of getting beaten down and remaining down, we hold our heads up high and do incredible good (this isn’t to say that Chas Vishalom bad things need to happen to see good, but when bad things happen, we shine).

We are in the age of Mashiach- as predicted by Zohar from this Parsha. We experience these trials because of being special. We have hope for a better time and a changed world; we are a minority among the nations (מִקְטָנִי). Unlike Noach, who didn’t believe in his impact to change the generation, we can and will (especially using technology as predicted by Zohar) spread light, goodness, kindness, and truth to the world. Because of the righteousness of Israel and our people, truth will shine through the falseness and darkness of the world around us. Primarily

through learning the Torah and doing Mitzvos, we will actively change the world's attitude and usher in the ultimate Redemption speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos