

Secrets of Noah’s Ark

Handout for Class 5: Lessons that we can learn from Noah

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The Midrash teaches that **Psalm 1** is about Noah.

v. 1. It is written, *“Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked, neither stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful”*:

“Happy is the man” refers to Noah; Rabbi Yehuda says the verse hints that Noah lived through three sinful generations, but he didn't let himself be affected by them: *“that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked”* refers to the generation of Enosh the grandson of Adam (when people began to worship the stars and planets, and G-d punished them by flooding 1/3 of the world, but they claimed it was a natural event); *“nor stood in the way of sinners”* refers to the generation of the worldwide Flood (who practiced violence, sexual transgressions and robbery; *“nor sat in the seat of the scornful,”* refers to the generation of the Tower of Babel (which rebelled against G-d, and He separated them into 70 languages so they dispersed).

v. 2. *“But his delight was in the law of the L-rd...”* the 7 Noahide Laws which he was commanded; *“...but in His law does he meditate,”* from which Noah inferred about G-d's command to bring 7 spiritually pure animals: *“He took of every pure beast and of all the pure fowl and brought up burnt offerings on the altar.”*

v. 3. *“And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water...”*: the L-rd "planted" Noah in the ark, in the midst of the streaming water. *“...that brings forth its fruit in its season”* alludes to Shem, *“and whose leaf does not wither”* refers to Ham, *“...and in whatsoever he does he shall prosper”* refers to Yafes (Japheth).

The Midrash teaches that **Psalm 92** is about the Messianic Era (which will be like an everlasting Sabbath), and about Noah, for whom there was a revelation of the Messianic in the Ark.

v.1. *“A song with musical accompaniment for the Sabbath day”* - the eternal Sabbath of the Messianic Era.

v. 13. *“The righteous one flourishes like the palm; as a cedar in Lebanon he grows”* refers to Noah.

v. 14. *“Planted in the house of the L-rd”* alludes to Noah, whom G-d planted in the ark;

“...they shall flourish in the courts of our G-d” refers to Noah's fathering of three sons.

v. 15. *“They shall still bring forth fruit in old age...”* because Noah began having children at age 500.

The lesson to take from Noah’s way of serving G-d

Based on a talk by the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, as translated and published by Sichos in English, Volume 23, p. 236-241. Excepted from the Sicha of Shabbos Parshas Noach [on Genesis 6:9 – 11:32].

In Noah’s service, then, we see three aspects: **1) his service was untouched by the world’s abysmal state; 2) he saved and reestablished the world; 3) in doing so, he raised the world to a yet higher level.** Let us explain them.

1. NOAH’S SERVICE WAS UNTOUCHED BY THE WORLD’S ABYSMAL STATE

Noah was “righteous and whole” even in his corrupt generation, as emphasized by the way he entered the Ark. His entire generation did not wish him to do so. Rashi explains (Gen. 7:13): ... G-d said, “I shall bring him in before the eyes of everyone, and we shall see whose word will prevail.” When the people saw that the flood was really beginning, and Noah was preparing to save himself in the ark, **they wanted to prevent him from entering.** Yet their opposition did not help them. Moreover, they saw a long line of animals, of every species in the world going into the ark to be saved, and yet they were outside the Ark, unable to do anything!

2. NOAH SAVED AND REESTABLISHED THE WORLD:

This has two aspects: **1) Noah's efforts before the flood**, and **2) his salvation of the world by bringing all species of land-life into the Ark**. We learn that the ark took 120 years to build, and Rashi (on Genesis 6:14) tells us the reason why: "So that the people of the generation of the Flood should see him occupied with it for 120 years, and [could] ask him, 'What is [the necessity of] this to you?' and he could say to them, 'G-d is about to bring a flood upon the world' — perhaps they will repent." Noah's work consisted of influencing his generation to repent.

In our days, we are waiting for G-d to send a flood that will cover the entire world. This is the Messianic Era that is coming very soon, when the entire world will be flooded with G-dliness. Noah was told a deadline of 120 years to prepare for this. We are also given a deadline, and they are related. The Flood of Noah came in his 600th year, and the flood of G-dliness will come no later than the year 6000 in the Hebrew Calendar. The coming of the Messianic Era, which starts the 7th millenium, is like the coming of the Sabbath day on Friday evening. But just like a Jew is obligated to bring in the Sabbath early, before sundown on Friday, G-d will bring the Messianic Era earlier than the deadline. We are already late in the "Friday afternoon" of the 6th millenium, so G-d can now bring it in at any time. It will happen immanently, and everyone needs to be ready for it now.

The Bible relates (Genesis 7:12), "*The rain was upon the earth,*" upon which Rashi comments, "He (G-d) brought them down with mercy, so that if the people would repent, these would be rains of blessing." Thus, even at the very last moment, if Noah could have been able to get them to repent, not only would there have been no flood, but the rains would have been transformed into "rains of blessing" ... This teaches how great was Noah's personal power to influence his generation: On his part, he could have brought them to repentance even at the last moment. But they had fallen to such a low state that they no longer had it within their nature to be able to repent.

After the Flood spiritually purified the world, people are on a higher level, and they always have the power to repent from their sins and return to G-d and be forgiven with His Mercy. So after the flood, it's no longer appropriate to work on influencing the world by using the approach of Noah. Instead, we have to do it using the approach of Abraham: to actively go out into the world and bring the light to others and light the candles of other peoples' souls, and then they will do the same for others. In this way, we create a chain reaction of G-dliness spreading through the world population, and this is making the world ready for the Messianic Era, speedily in our days.

The second aspect is that by bringing every species of land-creature into the Ark, Noah kept the world in existence — despite the fact that the world was in such a dismal state that the people did not repent even when the rains came.

3. NOAH RAISED THE WORLD TO A HIGHER LEVEL AFTER THE FLOOD

All the living beings in Noah's Ark were in a state resembling the Messianic Era. All the different species did not harm each other. This was a most unnatural phenomenon. This happened because the G-dliness revealed in the Ark was similar to that of the future era, when a wolf will dwell together with a lamb and none will harm another, for "the earth will be full with the knowledge of the L-rd." Even when the world was on the lowest of levels (so corrupt that it had to be destroyed), the condition in the ark resembled that of the future era - even **before** the ark was sealed. Because the animals in the ark behaved totally contrary to their natures, it made the first aspect of Noah's work even greater — that the people of his generation were unable to disturb Noah's service. The transformation of the animals actually began before they were in the ark, when they came from around the world to enter it and gathered together.

In the case of Noah, **it was a miracle that affected the whole world**. There were several aspects to this miracle:

1. Animals from all over the world came to Noah's Ark of their own accord; no one drove them to come
2. Not all animals and beasts came; only two of each non-kosher species. 3. Seven of each kosher species came.
4. Only the best came — "Those that had associated with their own species, and had not corrupted their way."
5. They all entered the ark in an orderly manner, without harming one another —contrary to their wild natures.

This miracle occurred when the world was on such a low state that the people did not repent. **Noah entered the ark (his service of saving the world)** against the wishes of the people, with great miracles. **And he saved the world and raised it to a higher level, despite the fact that he was a single individual against the whole world.** ...

Since this happened in the generation of the flood, a generation of a very low spiritual stature, it certainly applies to our days, since 1) the a spiritual descent that happened in the generation of the flood is impossible in our days, and 2) Noah lived before the revelation at Mt. Sinai: If he was nevertheless able to carry out his service without being hampered by his environment. We have the added spiritual strength from the Torah, so we certainly can bring ourselves and other people into the Ark of G-d's word, in Torah study and prayer, as we've explained.

Another lesson: All Noah had to do was to fulfill G-d's command in everything he did. All the above happened automatically, as a result of the fact that Noah was simply fulfilling G-d's will. In our time, the corresponding fulfillment of G-d's will that must be done is for more and more people to accept and observe the 7 Noahide Laws.

This concludes the course, and we look forward to seeing all of you personally here in Jerusalem, at the Third Holy Temple that will be built by our righteous Moshiach, may it happen immediately!