

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	HAFTARAH	KETUVIM
Noach	24 Oct. 2020	6 Cheshvan 5781	Gen. 6:9-11:32	Isa. 54:1-55:5	Luke 17:20-27

It is written, “This is the genealogy of Noach. Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. Noach walk with Elohim” (Gen. 6:9). The sages question the repetition of Noach’s name. They answer that the benefit of his good deeds are his, but no one else. This answer is supported by the words “in his generations,” as it was not necessary to repeat since the Torah already stated that in a wicked generation, Noach was righteous (vv. 5, 8).

The phrase “in his generations” emphasizes that the good deeds of Noach accomplished nothing to benefit his generations and to bring them back to righteousness, because those who benefited from his good deeds were only he himself and his children, who are his offshoots and are included in the verse’s mention of his name.

On a positive note, the verse magnifies the righteousness of Noach that he was unique in his praise beyond all the righteous people who came before him and his accomplishments far outshone theirs. Because although there were righteous people before Noach, they had the advantage of having learned moral principles from the righteous people of their generation, their teachers and mentors. This was not the case with Noach, who remained righteous despite the fact all his generations were wicked as implied “in his generations.”

On a deeper level, “Noach” means “rest.” The first of Noach’s greatest contribution to mankind was rest (*noach*). The sages¹ said that when Kadosh Barchu created Man, He gave him control over everything in Creation. But when Man sinned, the creations rebelled against him. Reish Lakish said: Before Noach, the waters of the world would periodically rise up in flood, cause the people’s corpse to float from their graves. Once the righteous Noach arrived, they rested. In the list of Noach’s accomplishments, this benefit of having brought “rest” to the world is what the verse is referring to when it mentions the name Noach for the second time.

Second accomplishment of Noach is the word “man” (אִישׁ; *ish*) which referred to the fact that Noach was “a man of the earth,” a master farmer as he knew how to grow from banished vine as said, “This one [Noach] does comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which YHWH has cursed” (Gen. 5:29). Before Noach came, the people did not have tools for plowing, so they turned over the earth with their hands. He came Noach came and made plows, sickles, and hoes for them. This gift of farming is what the verse alluded to with the term, “a man.”

Third, the verse states “righteous” which alludes that Noach is the foundation of the world as said, “a righteous one is the foundation of the world” (Prov. 10:25). If Noach did not exist, the world would not exist, for all humanity would be as if it had never been, because of the Flood that would have erased every living creature. However, because Noach was worthy of being saved, Hashem found His new world upon him. Mankind exists only because of Noach.

Four, “perfect”: The Talmud² explains Noach as righteous and perfect: meaning, righteous in his [Noach] deeds, perfect in his ways. Rashi explains that “perfect in his ways” means that Noach was humble and of lowly spirit. That even in his generations. Even though his generation was wicked and totally corrupt,

¹ Beresheis Rabbah 25:2

² BT, Avodah Zarah, 6a

Noach treated all his generation and previous generation with humble and lowly heart. He was unmatched in his humility and righteousness in three generations.

Finally, “Noach walked with Elohim.” This phrase should be understood as if it reads: “With Elohim, he walks [in a manner of] “*noach*,” which means “satisfaction.” Noach acted in a manner that would bring Hashem, so to speak, “satisfaction” and “contentment” that brought benefit to mankind.

It is written, “And Noach brought forth three sons: Shem, Ham, and Yepheth” (Gen. 6:10). R’ Kruspedai taught in the Zohar³: “These are the three dispositions, in a human being: the disposition of the soul, to be a helper for him in the service of his Creator – it is called Shem; the disposition of desire and the impulse, goading, riling, the body to sin – it is called Ham; and the disposition of the good impulse, guiding a person to all that is good, to beautify, his deeds through Torah and fear of Hashem – it is called Yepheth. This disposition guides a person, leading him to the way of life.

The Zohar explains: *neshamah* that first rouses a person to good action is termed “Shem” because it leads one to attain a good name or because it leads one to the service of the divine name; desire and the evil impulse is Ham who dishonored his father because it heats the body with passion, leading it to sin; and the good impulse, termed Yepheth, because through it one’s deeds become beautiful (*yapheh*).

³ Zohar, 21c