

TEMPLE BETH-EL SHABBAT AM TORAH STUDY 5782

NOACH.... Genesis 6:9-22

KOSHI = What's the Question that calls us to inquire?

What does it mean to be blameless/whole-hearted? Why does it specify in Noah's generation? What does it mean to walk with God?

PSHAT....*The Simple Meaning...What is the straightforward story we are trying to understand?*

6:9	This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless/whole-hearted in his age; Noah walked with God.—	אֱלֹהִים תּוֹלְדֵת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹלֵתוֹ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ
10	Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.	וַיֹּלֶד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת
11	The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness.	וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס
12	When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth,	וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי־ הִשְׁחִית כָּל־בְּשָׂר אֶת־דַּרְכּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ
13	God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth.	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל־בְּשָׂר בְּאֵז לִפְנֵי כִּי־מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּגִיעָהּ וְהִנְנִי מִשְׁחִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
14	Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch.	עֲשֵׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי־גֹפֶר קָנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־ הַתֵּבָה וְכִפְרֹתָ אֹתָהּ מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ בַּכֹּפֶר
15	This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.	וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אַמָּה אָרְזָה הַתֵּבָה חֲמֵשִׁים אַמָּה רְחֹבָהּ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה קוֹמָתָהּ
16	Make an opening for daylight in the ark, and terminate it within a cubit of the top. Put the entrance to the ark in its side; make it with bottom, second, and third decks.	תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה וְאֶל־אַמָּה תִּכְלְּנָה צֹהַר מִלְמַעְלָה וּפֶתַח הַתֵּבָה בְּצַדָּהּ תִּשְׂם תַּחְתִּים שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂה
17	“For My part, I am about to bring the Flood—waters upon the earth—to destroy all flesh under the sky in which there is breath of life; everything on earth shall perish.	וְאֲנִי הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־הַמַּבּוּל מִיָּם עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחַת כָּל־בְּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ
18	But I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark, with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives.	וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וּבְאֵת אֶל־הַתֵּבָה אֹתָהּ וּבְנֵיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּבְנֵי־בְנֵיךָ אִתְּךָ
19	And of all that lives, of all flesh, you shall take two of each into the ark to keep alive with you; they shall be male and female.	וּמִכָּל־הַחַי מִכָּל־בְּשָׂר שְׁנַיִם מִכֹּל תָּבִיא אֵלֶי־ הַתֵּבָה לְהַחֲיֵת אִתְּךָ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה יִהְיוּ

20	From birds of every kind, cattle of every kind, every kind of creeping thing on earth, two of each shall come to you to stay alive.	מִהָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ וּמִן־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינֵהּ מִכֹּל רָמַשׁ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ שְׁנַיִם מִכֹּל יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ לְהַחְיֹת
21	For your part, take of everything that is eaten and store it away, to serve as food for you and for them.”	וְאַתָּה קַח־לְךָ מִכֹּל־מֵאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל וְאִסְפֹּת אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ וּלְהֶם לְאֹכֶלָה
22	Noah did so; just as God commanded him, so he did.	וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים בֶּן עֲשָׂה

REMEZ.... The Hint...Searching for clues that gives us greater insight into the world of our ancestors

V. 9 ...הֵיחָדֵשׁ... Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless/whole-hearted

JPS... These cardinal terms in biblical Hebrew, *tsaddik* and *tamim*, are used here for the first time without definition, thus presupposing a clearly recognizable quality of virtue favored by God. As RAMBAN¹ indicates, *tsaddik* has its origin in legal terminology and implies one who is adjudged to be “in the right.” ...Accordingly, the term *tsaddik* describes one whose conducts if found to be beyond reproach by the divine Judge.... The term *tamim*, which is mostly found in ritual contexts, describes a sacrificial animal that is without blemish.... Only such an animal is acceptable to God.... As applied to human beings, *tamim* acquired a moral dimension connoting “unblemished” by moral fault—hence, a person of unimpeachable integrity. Such an individual enjoys God’s fellowship....

IBN EZRA... A man righteous (*tzaddik*) in his deeds and whole-hearted (*tamim*) in his heart.
RADAK²...perfect, without flaw; according to Tanchuma 5, he was born circumcised.

V. 9 ...בְּדִרְתָּיו... In his age...

TALMUD (Sanhedrin 108a:17)... Rabbi Yochanan says: Relative to the other people of his generation he was righteous and wholehearted, but not relative to those of other generations. And Reish Lakish says: In his generation he was righteous and wholehearted despite being surrounded by bad influences; all the more so would he have been considered righteous and wholehearted in other generations.

OR HACHAIM³...The word אלה accordingly describes the limited value of Noah's good deeds. They sufficed only to save himself. The additional word בְּדִרְתָּיו further underlines that Noah did not succeed to make penitents out of his peers. His sons who were considered as his "branches" are therefore included in the name Noah. The Torah accords Noah a compliment which it did not accord to righteous people who had lived before his time. Noah's righteous predecessors all had other righteous people to model themselves after, something that did not apply to Noah. He grew up surrounded only by wicked people. The word אלה therefore also has a positive connotation in that it sets Noah's pious conduct apart from all those who had preceded him

¹Nachmanides, or RAMBAN, (1194-1270) was a Sephardic Rabbi, philosopher, physician, Kabbalist, and biblical commentator.

² Rabbi David Kimhi (1160-1235) was a French medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

³ Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (1696-1743), a Talmudist and kabbalist, wrote *Or HaChaim*, his commentary on the Torah.

V. 9 ...אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ... *Noah walked with God...*

JPS...The exceptional inversion of Hebrew word order gives God pride of place in the sentence, thus accentuating the fact that the standards by which Noah's righteousness is judged are divine, not human.

SFORNO⁴...Noah walked in God's way trying to be helpful to others, and to instruct and if necessary to rebuke them, as our sages pointed out.

RADAK... a description of how Noah cleaved to his Creator. All his actions were designed to please his Creator. The reason why this is so remarkable is that it demonstrated the preponderance of his intellect over his baser urges, especially so as it would have been both more convenient for him and more socially advantageous for him to conform to the cultural mores of his time.

V. 10... *Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*

SFORNO... as soon as he began to rebuke his fellowmen he was granted children.

RADAK... why does the Torah mention this now when it had already told us about his three sons in 5:32? The Torah wanted us to know that these sons were born after Noah had already been certified by the Torah as "walking with God." Mention of these sons here indicates that he raised his sons to believe in God and to walk in His ways, also. Had his sons not been good people they would not have been saved at the time of the deluge, even though their father was a righteous person....

V. 11-12... *The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness. When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth,*

RABBEINU BAHYA⁵... The people of that time were guilty of four sins: 1) idolatry; 2) sexual licentiousness including incest; 3) murder; 4) gratuitous violence.

DRASH *The Interpretation...How do ancient truths impact our modern reality?*

V. 9 *This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless/whole-hearted in his age; Noah walked with God.—*

ALSHICH⁶... Noah was personally righteous but did not teach others as Avraham did. Therefore if his sons had not been worthy of salvation in their own right he could not have saved them, just as he was unable to save even the children of his contemporaries.... That is, He eschewed idolatry. The name Elokim signifies Hashem's attribute of judgment, thus Noah served only out of fear, not love.

⁴ Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1550) was a biblical commentator, philosopher, and physician from Italy.

⁵ Rabbi Bahya ben Asher (1255-1340) was a commentator on Tanach.

⁶ Moshe Alshich (1508-1593) was a rabbi, preacher, and commentator from Safed.

RASHI⁷... In the case of Abraham, Scripture says, (Genesis 24:40) “[God] before whom I walked”; Noah needed God’s support to uphold him in righteousness, Abraham drew his moral strength from himself and walked in his righteousness by his own effort (Genesis Rabbah 30:10).

OR HACHAIM... the sequence נח נח, is illustrated in an imaginary conversation between Moses and Noah reported in *Devarim Rabbah* 11:3. In that conversation Noah claimed to have been greater than Moses because he was saved during the deluge. Moses retorted that Noah had not been able to save anyone other than himself, whereas he had saved his generation after the sin of the golden calf.

MARTIN BUBER⁸... Noah stays put in nature a man of the soil is rescued from the deluge. Abraham is the first to make his way into history as a proclaimer of God’s dominion.

SOD.... The Secret What deeper knowing do we take away after spending time with the Torah text?

V. 9 This is the line of Noah. —Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless/whole-hearted in his age; Noah walked with God.—

BA’ALEI BRIT AVRAM⁹...Throughout all of this, as if in all of his generations, both in the generation of his youth and in the generation of his old age [he was righteous]. Throughout them all, he was of one character. He was a righteous man in all of the generations that passed over him. And the text says "complete" (*tamim*), for he was not like some of the righteous people who have erred and in the end changed course and turned over (towards righteousness). Rather, he had always been 'complete,' for he had no blemish or perversion. And, if you were to say, "How is it possible for him to have had this [quality]?" Then, say that the reason for this is "Noah walked with God." This is to say, that he never had any dealing with a human creature, but he would spend all day alone [i.e., with God]. And for this, he had the power to be saved from those [humans] and did not sin at all. Proof has been brought for his isolation, for the whole world had engaged in sexually illicit actions, and that is how they had many sons and daughters, and, as such, it says, "It was when the human species began to increase." Indeed, Noah did not produce offspring until he had reached 600 years of age, and all that he produced was three sons and nothing more, and all of this is to teach about his isolation....

TOLEDOT YITZHAK¹⁰... Noah remained silent because he did not believe that God would really bring the Flood to destroy all life. He lacked faith. He thought that God was just going to frighten the wicked people of his generation into changing their evil and violent behavior. So he did not speak up and tell them to save themselves.

RABBI MORRIS ADLER¹¹... A great leader is not only a person of ideas, not only a person of personal integrity and devotion, but also a person of tenderness, a person of compassion.... If he is insensitive to the sorrows of people, all of his ideals and all of his personal qualities fail to confer greatness upon him.

⁷ Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105) was a medieval French rabbi and author.

⁸ Buber, Martin. "Abraham the Seer," *On the Bible*. Ed. N. Glater, Schocken, New York, 1968. p. 35. Buber (1878-1965) was a philosopher from Vienna who lived in Israel.

⁹ A kabbalistic commentary written by Rabbi Abraham Azulai in Gaza c. 1618- c.1622.

¹⁰ A commentary explaining the simple midrashic meaning of the text composed c. 1475-c.1535.

¹¹ *The Voice Still Speaks*, Block, New York, 1969, p.20. Rabbi Morris Adler (1906-1966) was a Conservative Rabbi from Russia who lived in Detroit, Michigan from 1938 until his death where he was murdered during Shabbat services by a mentally ill youth from his congregation. He was an educator, spokesman, and advocate for social justice.