

HaShem tells Noach to get into the ark.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לְנֹחַ בְּאַחַתָּהּ וְכָל־בֵּיתָהּ אֵל־הַתְּבֵה כִּי־אַתָּה רַאֲיִתִּי צַדִּיק
לְפָנַי בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה:

“And HaShem said to Noach, ‘You shall enter, and all your household, into the ark, because I see that you are righteous before Me in this generation.’ (Genesis 7:1).

Noach was special in his generation. This is the second time the Torah tells us this. It previously says, “Noach was a righteous man, complete in his generation.” (ibid 6:9).

Was Noach a righteous man per all standards or was he only righteous because his generation was so bad and HaShem wanted at least someone to save? It seems to me, clearly, the fact that the Torah calls him righteous, he must “righteous” on any standard of “ish tzadik” Man of Righteousness. The Torah would not mince words and give a lower standard to one person than another, calling one righteous when undeserved. Additionally, we already learned the redundant “complete in his generation.” Adding “complete” in addition to “righteous” qualifies that he was indeed righteous, even in his generation.

However, why did it not say “complete” when HaShem was talking to Noach? What lesson can we learn from this and did Noach no longer possess pure emuna (faith) immediately prior to the flood?

The Gemara Eruvin 18b learns from our verse, “and Rabbi Yirmeya ben Elazar further said: Only some of a person’s praise should be said in his presence, and all of it may be said not in his presence. Only some of his praise should be said in his presence, as it is written: “And the

Lord said to Noach, come, you and all your house into the ark, for you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation” (Genesis 7:1).”

Rashi explains the Gemara. “It does not say “righteous and complete” (as it does at the beginning of the Sedrah); hence we may infer that only a part of a man’s good qualities should be enumerated in his presence (since here HaShem is speaking to Noach and calls him only “righteous”), but that in his absence the whole of his good qualities may be told (since when the Torah speaks about him in the earlier passage it calls him “righteous and complete.”) from Eruvin 18b.”

We note that in both instances the praise is qualified by his generation.

Gemara Sanhedrin 108a says, “With regard to the verse: “These are the generations of Noach; Noach was a righteous man, and wholehearted in his generations” (Genesis 6:9), Rabbi Yoḥanan 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.” It seems there is a dispute if the generation is being provided in order to mitigate Noach’s righteousness or to exult it. We can notice that Reish Lakish was stated second, i.e. the lasting opinion.

In Bereshis Rabbah (32:9) it says, “Noach was lacking in faith. Had the waters not reached his ankles he would not have entered the ark.” This is based on the verse that “Noach with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters.” This Midrash is pointing out that perhaps Noach was righteous but he was no longer ‘complete’ in his faith.

Ramban says, “Noach constructed the ark many days before the flood, and when the time of the flood arrived on the tenth day of the second month, HaShem again commanded him that he and all his household come into the ark. This is why He said to him at first: “you and yours sons, and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” (ibid 6:18). He thereby informed him that on account of his merit alone they will be saved since He did not say, “You (in the plural) I have seen righteous before Me.” And He commanded that he take and bring of the clean beasts and clean fowl seven and seven, and then He informed him of the day of the flood, at which time he was to come into the ark. And Noach did so for “in the selfsame day came Noach... into the ark.” (ibid 7:13). This refers to the day when the rains began, namely, the seventeenth day of the second month. This is the meaning of the verse “And Noach came into the ark because of the waters of the flood. (ibid 7:7). “ Here Ramban questions the righteousness in that perhaps Noach only came into the ark because of the waters. Noach did not come because of HaShem’s command. If so, how righteous could Noach be?

Sforno says, “the way the verse is constructed to say that Noach was the righteous one, it means his family was not. They were only saved because of his merit.” Clearly Noach had merit to be saved.

Chizkuni points out the difference between the two times that the Torah judges Noach. First time was “elokim” the attribute of justice. Second time it was “HaShem” the attribute of mercy. The Torah says not only was Noach righteous but he was complete in his generation, with the attribute of strict justice. With mercy it simply calls him “righteous.” Thus is Chizkuni.

In his generation he still had complete faith. We would think that the attribute of mercy would expound on a person's merits. However, here, the attribute of mercy actually simply calls him righteous but not complete. Did something happen to his faith?

Haamek Davar says, "When it says "and your household" it means that Noach was permitted to take with him his servants and animals, not to contribute to the repopulating of the earth, but to help him in his labors. Note that until this point the name Elokim has been used, indicating strict judgment, whereas in this verse the four-letter Name indicating the attribute of mercy appears." Haamek Davar connects the allowance of the servants and help to the attribute of mercy. With mercy the servants and those animals were saved.

Kli Yakar says, "'For I have seen you righteous before this generation.' The Torah did not call him righteous in this generation before he was commanded to make the ark (it said he was righteous; complete in his generation). It was still doubtful if the generation would repent. Additionally, Methuselach was still alive and he was righteous. Then Noach waited seven days to enter the ark because of the days of mourning for Methuselah. What is the term that after seven days the flood came (ibid 7:10). These additional seven days is because there was already 120 years. Now, the Torah already limited life to 120 years (ibid 6:3). So the 120 years is to see if this new generation would repent. HaShem also waited for the seven days of shiva because by observing mourning and the hesped of a righteous person, then perhaps the people would give heart and repent. However, after they all continued to fall, HaShem can then say "I see you as a righteous person in this generation." So according to me, many generations passed in Noach's lifetime and he was righteous in all of them. In this current situation he was righteous as well. Noach was "complete" in opposition to the prostitution and immorality and he was "righteous" in opposition to the rampant theft."

Kli Yakar points out that not only was Noach considered righteous prior to building the ark, but also after it, as he stayed consistent while his generation continued to descend. We can wonder why the new children and generation born in the 120 years were left to perish just because the older generation was corrupt. It is clear by Kli Yarkar's reading of the verses that the generation continued to descend and deserved destruction on their own merit.

Ohr Chaim also touches on the idea of a new generation that would be wiped out for the continued corruption of the previous generation. He says, "Why did HaShem have to repeat here that He had seen that Noach was a righteous man in his generation? HaShem may have feared that Noach would misinterpret the command to enter the ark together with all his immediate family. He might have thought a) that every family member would be saved due to his or her individual merit; in that case the Torah should not have addressed the command to build the ark to Noach in the singular; b) he might have thought that his wife, children, and their respective wives were being saved because they had not yet reached the age of accountability. If Noach had thought this he might have been tempted to invite all those of his friends who were young enough to share the ark with him in order to survive. Even if he had not done so on his own initiative, he might have wondered why all these youngsters were doomed to perish. HaShem told Noach once more that He had found only him as a righteous person at that time in order to lay to rest any of the other ideas Noach might have had on the subject. He now understood that any youngster who did not have a righteous father was caught in the sins of his father who was punished to die without issue. The statement of our sages that Jewish minors have a share in the world to come, whereas Gentile minors do not (Kohelet Rabbah 4,1 and Avot de Rabbi Nathan 36,1), may be based on our verse. In Noach's generation everyone was considered an idolator and it was reasonable to assume that the children would take after their fathers. Noach, on the other

hand, took a more optimistic view of the possible development of the minors. G'd therefore had to tell him that he could not save any youngsters barring his own.”

Radak points out in the words that “you are righteous before me, in this generation” is that “you and your family are therefore entitled to escape the deluge in order to form the nucleus of a new world order afterwards.” It would be Noah’s responsibility to then create a new generation after the flood that would be righteous, too.

To decipher this subject, and parse the words of the Torah to find out if Noah was no longer complete or as righteous after building the ark, we look at the next verses. “And Noah did everything the Lord commanded him.” (ibid 7:6). This means he entered the ark and brought in all the animals. The next few verses describe how Noah fulfilled the Lord’s commands. First it says “Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, waters upon the earth.” (ibid 7:7). Then it says “Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the Flood.” Did he go in because he was commanded or did the waters cause him to go in? We see further, “And on the seventh day the waters of the Flood came upon the earth.” (ibid 7:10). Thus, Noah goes into the ark because of the waters, then the animals came to Noah (ibid 7:8-9), then after seven more days the flood came. What does this mean?

The difference in how the Torah judges Noah is that he is “complete in his generation” when talking about Noah and he is “righteous in this generation” when talking to Noah. The attribute of justice calls Noah exactly what he is. Righteous and in his generation he is complete, free from moral corruption and theft, and also, of pure faith. It is now the attribute of mercy that calling him righteous in *this* generation; not judging Noah but judging his generation. Even in the light of mercy the generation deserved to be wiped out. Noah would

question if anyone else deserved saving. The Torah answers that even with mercy the entire generation had to be wiped out, save Noach and his family.

Another difference in the wording is that prior to building the ark Noach is described as righteous and complete. After building the ark he is righteous in his generation. He is not just righteous for himself and complete in his generation, but he is righteous in his generation. As the generation descended he continued to stay righteous. Further, with strict justice Noach himself was complete and therefore, he himself should be saved. Let him start anew, perhaps, only with his wife. However, because of the Merciful One, his wife, children, and daughters-in-law were all saved. They were saved on his merit with the attribute of mercy. Perhaps they did not merit to be saved because it was only Noach himself who was righteous and complete. The Torah does not mention complete because it does not want to speak lowly of Noach's family. Suffice to say he was righteous in the generation so they are all to be saved.

As for Noach's faith, the Midrash seems to say that Noach was no longer "complete" because he lacked faith. It is hard to say that Noach had complete faith prior to building the ark but then when he built the ark and the flood was imminent he lost faith. Would he not see his ark and know he would be saved? Additionally, the verse first said he followed every command (verse 6), he went into the ark because of the water (verse 7) but that the flood only came seven days later (verse 10). If Noach really lacked faith he would wait until the strong waters of the flood actually came. Yet, because of HaShem's command he was in the ark for seven days while there was no flood yet.

We can interpret the words like this: Noach listened to HaShem and entered the ark because the waters were coming, based on what HaShem told him. The animals filled the ark, and then the waters came seven days later. We do not see a lack of faith. However, we can learn

this lesson about faith. Prior to the flood warning and building the ark, Noach was perfect in his faith. After HaShem had him build an ark, Noach looked to the ark and saw his salvation. He was able to sit in the ark for seven days and await the flood, knowing in security, that the ark was his salvation. The fact that he had an ark was a dent in his faith. It was minute, but present. He was no longer complete. When a person sees a vehicle for his salvation in front of him then it is not faith anymore, but relying on natural circumstances. Pure faith is when there is no life raft and a person still believes perfectly that HaShem will be his salvation.