

פרשת בראשית

One of the more interesting anomalies in this week's *parsha* is the death of Chanoch, who is described as having "walked with Hashem" before being "taken" at the relatively young age of 365.¹ What is the connection to be made between this particular language and the notable age of passing? Additionally, what does it mean to "walk with Hashem," and why does the Torah say that Chanoch was "taken" instead of simply saying that he "passed away"?

An interesting connection is made by both the Ibn Ezra² and Rabbeinu Bechaye,³ who point out that Chanoch is described as having "walked with Hashem" in the same way that Noach walked with Hashem in next week's *parsha*,⁴ as well as Avraham Avinu being commanded to walk before Hashem in *Parshas Lech Lecha*,⁵ and Hashem commanding Bnei Yisrael to follow Him in *Parshas Re'eh*.⁶

The Netziv⁷ and Malbim⁸ comment that Chanoch's walking with Hashem means that he was devoted and immersed in his *ahavas Hashem*, enabling him to follow Hashem to obtain the truth and observe His mitzvos in all of the ways of the world. On one occasion, his immersion in isolation was so great that he literally ascended to the heavens, lost from the rest of his generation, just as Eliyahu HaNavi would do later on;⁹ Chanoch's accompaniment of Hashem let him separate himself from this world, just as one of the greatest *Nevi'im* would do. The *Bechor Shor*¹⁰ adds that Chanoch was a *chassid gamur*, an absolutely righteous person, and as a result, Hashem took him from this world when he was only a third into his life span so he would be separated from the evil on Earth. But if this is the case, then why does Chanoch not gather the same level of critical acclaim and admiration for his purity and piety that Eliyahu HaNavi, Avraham Avinu, and Noach receive?

The *Radak*, Rav Dovid Kimche,¹¹ says that Chanoch channeled all of his love and desire into fulfilling the will of Hashem, which enabled him to acquire a deep understanding of the ways of his Creator at the age of 65. For the remaining 300 years of his life on earth, he walked with Hashem, and despite this, he did not neglect his duties of *pru u'rvu*, continuing to produce children despite his elevated status. However, as a result of his continued delving into the profundities of Hashem's ways, Chanoch came to despise his body, so he stopped engaging in the *mitzvah* of *pru u'rvu*; Hashem decided that he had served his purpose in this world, and removed him.

¹ בראשית ה:כב-כד

² אבן עזרא בראשית ה:כב

³ רבינו בחיי בראשית ה:כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים

⁴ בראשית ו:ט

⁵ בראשית יז:א

⁶ דברים יג:ה

⁷ העמק דבר בראשית ה:כב ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים, העמק דבר בראשית ה:כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך

⁸ מלבי"ם בראשית ה:כב-כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך

⁹ מלכים ב' ב:טז

¹⁰ ר' יוסף בכור שור בראשית ה:כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים

¹¹ רד"ק בראשית ה:כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים

With that having been said, perhaps it was also Chanoch's surroundings that helped form his fate. Rashi¹² explains that Chanoch's walking with Hashem refers to him being a righteous man who unfortunately tended to easily succumb to evil. To prevent him from being molded into a person of evil, Hashem rushed to take him away from the Earth and pass away before his time, and as a result, the *pasuk* was changed to say "וְאֵינְנוּ" instead. A *medrash* in *Bereshis Rabbah*¹³ quotes a *pasuk* from *Yechezkel*¹⁴ which shows that by taking Chanoch before his time, Hashem was removing the ability for his eyes to desire, which would allow him to leave this world with a sense of virtue and principle instead of leaving as a man tarnished by evil.

Throughout time, *Am Yisrael* has found themselves in a world lacking standards and morals, and at times, we are provoked to join such depravity and degeneracy that surrounds us. Ultimately, each day it is up to us to remember what our purpose in this world is, and we should always strive to withstand such distracting dissoluteness by immersing ourselves in both *yiras shamayim* and *avodas Hashem*, for that will enable us to truly walk with Hashem.

¹² רש"י בראשית ה:כד ד"ה ויתהלך חנוך

¹³ בראשית רבה כה:א

¹⁴ יחזקאל כד:טז