



# תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Noach

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*This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the soldiers of the IDF, and the hostages and the wounded.*

## Ramban on Our Parshah: The Greatness of Noach

Reading Rashi, we can come away with a less-than-flattering picture of Noach:

- Our parshah begins by saying, "These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a righteous man, he was flawless in his generations," Rashi comments, "Since it mentioned Noach, it said a nice thing about him." Rav Dovid Kviat (*Succat Dovid*) understands that this reduces the praise of Noach to something pro forma.
- When the Torah says of Noach that he was "flawless in his generations," Rashi quotes a midrash in which some suggest that Noach was only considered righteous in comparison with his generation. In a greater generation he would have been viewed as inferior (Sanhedrin 98a).
- That same sentence says that Noach walked "with Hashem," and Rashi points out that Hashem told Avraham to walk "before Hashem (Bereishit 17:1)."

On the other hand, Ramban reads Noach more positively:

- Parshat Bereishit ended with the statement that Noach "found favor in Hashem's eyes," and Ramban comments that all of Noach's actions were pleasant before Hashem.
- The start of our parshah says that Noach was "a righteous man, flawless in his generations," and Ramban says that Noach was meritorious and perfect in his right-

eousness, worthy of being saved from the flood.

- When we are told that Noach was righteous "in his generations," Ramban explicitly rejects Rashi's midrash, saying instead that the sentence teaches that in those times, Noach was the only one who was righteous.

This debate between Rashi and Ramban may be about a fundamental question: If Noach was wonderful, why didn't Hashem tell him to go to Eretz Canaan and to walk before Him? Rashi responds that Noach was not as great as Avraham. But Ramban could point to a midrash in which Rabbi Nechemiah explained that Noach dealt with a much tougher generation. Noach was like someone walking in deep mud, while Avraham walked on roads. (Bereishit Rabbah 30:10)

In sum: Rashi says that Noach was not Avraham because he was too weak to be Avraham. Ramban contends that Noach was great, but his generation was not ready and so Hashem gave him a different role to play. [Similarly, see *Succat Dovid* Noach 6] Rashi's approach is certainly Torah, of course, but let us adopt Ramban's model when we understand people. What we perceive as a weakness may actually reflect the unique mission Hashem has set before them.

## Parshah Riddles for Kids: Noach

Age 4-8: The Torah's word for the big flood in Parshat Noach is: a) Mabul, b) Mellah, c) Mayor Goodway (a)

Age 8-12: The name of the place where people built a big tower was a) Ashur, b) Bavel, c) Woodmere (b)

Age 12+: What was the name of Avraham's grandfather? (Nachor)

## Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 1

Our chapter begins by telling us that after the passing of Moshe, "servant of Hashem", Hashem spoke with Yehoshua, "servant of Moshe". Yehoshua's position is made clear from the start: His legitimacy stems from his connection with Moshe. (1:1)

Hashem tells Yehoshua that with Moshe gone, he must pick up the mission of bringing the Jews into Israel. Using language which echoes Devarim 11:24-25, Hashem promises to give the Jews the land and support them, reiterating that all will be "as I was with Moshe." (1:2-5)

Hashem tells Yehoshua three times, "Be strong and courageous." Yehoshua was already told to "be strong and courageous" multiple times in the Torah; see Devarim 1:38, 3:28, 31:7 and 31:23. Here, Rashi says that Hashem is ordering Yehoshua to be strong and courageous regarding running the affairs of the nation, observing the Torah and fighting wars. (1:6-9)

It is worth noting that the command to "be strong and courageous" was not only for Yehoshua; Hashem told Ye-

hoshua *leimor*, to repeat the message to the nation. This demand was for them as well. Rabbi Shlomo Luria so valued this passage that he recited it with *birkot haTorah* daily. (Shu"t Maharshal 56)

Yehoshua then ordered the officers leading the nation to prepare them to cross the Yarden, This included preparing *tzeidah*; Radak says this refers to food other than the manna, while Rashi understands it to mean weaponry. Either way, the Jews are expected to prepare natural means of survival and victory. (1:10-11)

Last, Yehoshua turns to the tribes of Reuven and Gad, and part of Menasheh, telling them to keep their promise to cross the Yarden and fight on behalf of the nation before returning east of the Yarden. They declare that they will honor their commitment, listening to Yehoshua as they listened to Moshe, so long as Hashem is with Yehoshua. (1:12-18) They even commit to punish all rebels with death; Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 3:8) sees this as a sign that Yehoshua holds royal status.

## The 613 Mitzvot: #2—Circumcision

Hashem commanded Avraham to circumcise the males in his household. (Bereishit 17) Rambam points out that this is reiterated in Vayikra 12:3 to demonstrate that it remains obligatory even after Sinai (Peirush haMishnayot, Chullin 7:6). *Sefer haChinuch* counts this as the Torah's second mitzvah, and suggests that one purpose is to mark the Jewish people as physically unique, just as our mitzvot mark us as spiritually unique. *Sefer haChinuch* also notes that this mitzvah shows that just as we complete our bodies with deeds (such as circumcision), so we can complete our souls with our deeds. [And see Midrash Tanchuma Tazria 5, on the importance of human improvement of our world.]

Two blessings are recited at a *brit milah*: *al hamilah* and *l'hachniso b'vrivo shel Avraham Avinu*. The former is recited by the *mohel* before the act of circumcision; the latter blessing is recited after the incision begins. [See Rosh Shabbat 19:10, Yoreh Deah 265:1, Chatam Sofer II Yoreh Deah 249, Tzitz Eliezer 5:14.] The latter blessing thanks Hashem for instructing us to bring the baby "into the covenant of our ancestor Avraham." The community then responds, "Just as he has entered the covenant, so may he enter Torah, *chuppah* and good deeds." Rabbi Yosef Karo explained that Torah is listed before marriage because the Talmud (Kiddushin 29b) advises that one should learn Torah before marrying. Both of those come before "good deeds" because the talmudic age for marriage is 18, and we are taught that one is not liable for misdeeds before the age of 20 (Beit Yosef Yoreh Deah 265:2).

In some communities, *Shehechyanu* is recited as well; see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 265:7.

## Israel's Chief Rabbis: Prenup Agreements, Rav Chaim Dovid HaLevi

Rabbi Chaim Dovid HaLevi was Chief Rabbi of Rishon LeTzion from 1951-1972; he concurrently served on the Rabbinical Council of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate. When Rabbi Ovadia Yosef was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel in 1973, Rabbi HaLevi took over as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv and kept that role until 1997.

Rav Chaim Dovid HaLevi was asked about financial prenuptial agreements which don't follow halachah in managing finances. Here is his reply (*Shu"t Mayim Chayim* 1:63):

I will first relate to your honor's words from the end of your letter, for in truth I have heard others, too, arguing against [prenuptial] financial agreements between spouses, saying that it appears as though they are building their homes with thoughts of divorce and death. But I am surprised by such claims; all of the laws of *ketuvot* found in Even Ha'Ezer, which are built on the foundations of the words of our rabbis, the sages of the Talmud, and the great rabbis of the earlier and later generations, are only legal arrangements for financial relationships between spouses. What is the difference between an arrangement that comes about via Halachah and an arrangement by agreement?

It is especially clear that with all of the importance of married life, as the eternal structure of *nisuin*, if financial matters are not arranged well then suspicion will remain between the spouses. This could undermine married life, for it is the nature of the world that every person, including male and female spouses, worry first and foremost about their property. Therefore, our rabbis did not leave any empty space in arranging the rights of the husband and wife, and in the arrangement of their joint assets and the property that each of them owns. All is arranged in Halachah for the benefit of the stability of married life, to prevent friction and suspicion between the spouses, and to manifest peace in their lives.

But all [of the laws] that our rabbis arranged as Halachah do not bind spouses in any financial matter, at all. They may arrange the financial relationships between themselves as they wish, as we will explain further along. This is actually a financial agreement between the spouses. Not only is this not against Halachah, its roots are already found in Halachah...

## Upcoming Learning!

*All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted*

6:05-6:48 PM Shabbat October 21

**Halachah and the Artificial Uterus, Part 2**, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

7:30-9:00 PM Monday October 23

**Medical Ethics: Ozempic, Wegovy and the New Wave of Weight Loss Treatments**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtorcz>

Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme>

*CME credit pending*

9:45-10:15 AM Sunday October 29

**New weekly series! Giants of Halachah: A Blend of History and Halachah**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

7:30-8:30 PM Monday October 30

**New weekly series! Halachah in Healthcare Settings, based on Nishmat Avraham**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>

Please register at <https://ematai.org/medicalchabura>

*Note: Materials are in Hebrew*

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