

חסידות

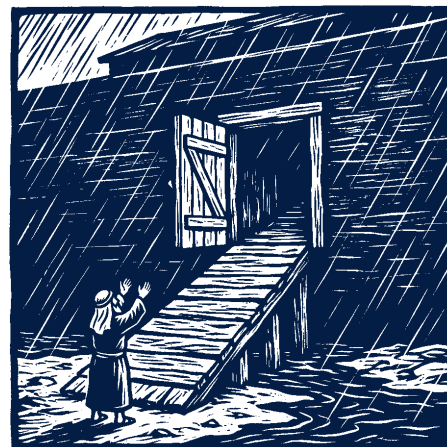
From the Chassidic Courts

KOZHNITZ · NOACH, AVODAT YISRAEL

Why Noach hesitated before entering the ark

Avodat Yisrael

Noach's hesitation to enter the ark did not stem from a deficiency of faith but from the tzaddik's (righteous one's) characteristic effort to sweeten harsh judgments and withhold assent to a decree, thereby striving to arouse Divine mercy and avert it, even as he outwardly prepared for its fulfillment. Thus "ketanei emunah" (those of little faith) is reinterpreted not as a flaw but as the praiseworthy reluctance of a tzaddik to accept a severe decree as final. AI SUMMARY



"And Noach came, etc., because of the waters of the flood." Rashi comments that even Noach was among the "ketanei emunah" (those of little faith) — he believed and yet did not believe that the flood would come, and he did not enter the ark until the waters forced him in, see there.

Now this matter is astonishing. Noach the tzaddik (righteous one) — heaven forbid that he should have lacked faith in his Creator, blessed be He! Moreover, it is well known that one hundred and twenty years before the flood he labored at building the ark, and he also rebuked and warned the people of his generation, as is explained — and yet he himself would be among the "ketanei emunah"?

However, one can resolve the words of our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, [as follows]: it is the way of tzaddikim to sweeten harsh judgments and to seek mercy and favor from Hashem, may He be blessed, upon His creatures. And even though it seemed to Noach that the Holy One, blessed be He, had decreed a severe decree, [he sought] through prayer and through his holy thoughts to draw forth mercy upon the world. And it is stated in the Idra

Rabba: "the secret of Hashem is for those who fear Him" — and until they give assent, judgments do not descend upon the world, see there.

If so, Noach the tzaddik, since he desired to strengthen the measure of chesed (kindness) and to nullify the decree of the flood, did not allow his mind to fully accept the thought that the word of the King had already gone forth and could not be changed. Rather, he kept strengthening himself in his thought, saying: "Hashem will relent and have compassion, and His mercies will be aroused over His other attributes." Therefore our Sages, may their memory be blessed, called him — with the sweetness of their language — one of the "ketanei emunah," meaning that he believed and yet did not believe; that is to say, he did not wish to believe, so as not to assent to the judgments. And it was only because he was alone in the world that he was unable to save all the people of his generation; but he did what was his to do, and did not enter [the ark] until the waters forced him in.

