מפרשים

Classical Commentaries

IBN EZRA

Why does the Torah say God smelled the offering?

Genesis 8:21

God's "smelling" the offering is explained by Ibn Ezra as figurative language—He does not literally smell or eat, but the sacrifice was accepted and pleased Him, assuaging His anger and drawing down a Divine influence upon man; Ibn Ezra adds that God revealed this resolution immediately to Noach, who was a prophet. Sforno differs on timing and meaning: God withheld this revelation from Noach and his sons until after they accepted His commandments and the covenant was established, and he explains "the devisings of man's mind" as reflecting a weakened human constitution after the flood, in which the intellect no longer governs during youth, allowing the appetites to dominate. AI SUMMARY

"The LORD smelled the pleasing odor, and the LORD said to Himself: "Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devisings of man's mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done."

SMELLED. — Va-yarach (smelled) follows the paradigm of va-yanach (rested) in and rested (va-yanach) in all the borders of Egypt (Ex. 10:14). The resh is vocalized with a pattach because the chet which follows it is a guttural. This is in keeping with the rules of Hebrew grammar. Heaven forbid that one conclude from our verse that God smells. Neither does He eat, as Who did eat the fat of their sacrifices (Deut. 32:38) states. The meaning of our verse is that God accepted the burnt offering and it pleased Him. It may be compared to a human being who smells a pleasant scent and enjoys it.

THE SWEET SAVOUR. — Nicho'ach (sweet savour) comes from the same root as menuchah (rest). The chet is doubled in nicho'ach as the final peh of the root of ve-na'afufe'ah (and her adulteries) is doubled (Hos. 2:4). Its meaning is that the sweet odor assuaged God's anger, or that it caused a power from on high to rest on man.

IN HIS HEART. — El libbo means in His heart. He then revealed His secret to Noah who was a prophet.

[I WILL NOT AGAIN CURSE THE GROUND.] — As I did on account of Adam, as it is written, cursed is the ground for thy sake (Gen. 3:17).

THE IMAGINATION. — Yetzer (the imagination) refers to the nature that man was created with.

NEITHER WILL I AGAIN SMITE. — Via a flood.

[AGAIN.] — Od means forever, or again. And wept on his neck a good while (od) (Gen. 46:29) is similar.

SFORNO, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

In His heart. — He did not reveal this resolution to Noach and his sons until after they had accepted His commandments and He established His covenant with them.

For the inclination of man's heart. — Human makeup was now inferior to what it was before the flood and the intellect no longer held sway during the years of youth. This enabled the appetites to achieve domination

