

חסידות

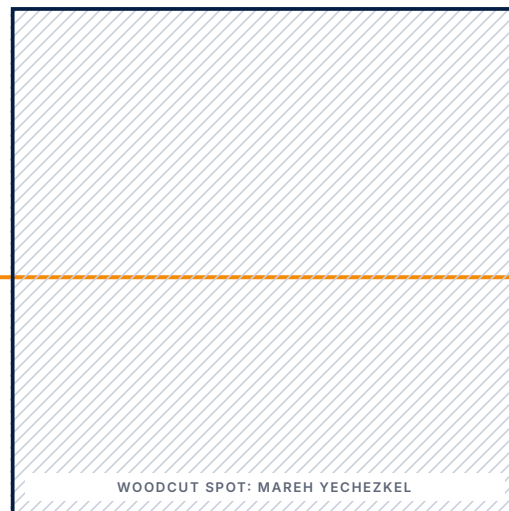
From the Chassidic Courts

SHINOVA · MAREH YECHEZKEL ON TORAH, NOACH

Why Noach stayed the same his whole life

Mareh Yechezkel

Noach's very name and the doubling of "toldot Noach, Noach" signal that he remained static—a complete tzaddik (righteous one) who served Hashem out of fear and for his own sake, never progressing in daas (knowledge) or yirat Hashem (fear of God), praying only for himself and never for his generation; by contrast, true growth comes through the path of the baal teshuvah (penitent), like Avraham and Moshe, whose service was driven by love and constant self-renewal, ascending daily to new levels, while deeds done without dechilu (awe) and rechimu (love)—like Noach's—remain "resting" below and cannot ascend on high. AI SUMMARY



"Eleh toldot Noach... (These are the generations of Noach)... Noach walked..." They have already raised the difficulty concerning the doubling of the word "Noach" [in the verse], and also that it should have said "the generations of Noach: Shem, Cham..." etc. Furthermore, what is the meaning of the expression "hithalech" (walked, in the reflexive/intensive form), since it should have said simply "halach Noach" (Noach walked)? Also, regarding what is written "b'dorotav" (in his generations, plural) — it would have sufficed to say "b'doro" (in his generation, singular). And furthermore, concerning the midrash that interprets this unfavorably [toward Noach], it is difficult to know from where [we derive] that the verse is speaking disparagingly of tzaddikim (righteous ones). In truth, one must consider its character, for here it seems at first glance that he was a great tzaddik. Yet they have already said [Bereishit Rabbah 28]: "Even Noach was not truly worthy, except that he found favor."

The explanation of the matter is based on what is said: "In the place where baalei teshuvah (penitents) stand, complete tzaddikim (righteous ones) are not able to stand" (Berachot 34b). For there are complete tzaddikim who fulfill all the mitzvot and guard themselves from all transgressions, and have not committed a transgression all the days of their lives; but they also love to eat and drink and rejoice, and because of this they are always, as it were, lying down, standing still at one level from their youth until their old age. For every single day they pray with the same kavanah (intention/focus) as yesterday, and they do not add any daas (knowledge) or yirat Hashem (fear of God) at all.

However, there is another level above these, namely the "faithful of spirit," who occupy themselves with the work of Heaven not for their own sake, and who cast behind them all the desires of this world — as our Sages of blessed memory said: "The words of Torah endure only in one who makes himself cruel [to himself], etc." (Eruvin 22a). Their

entire aim is only to do the will of their Creator until the very exhaustion of the soul, and to cause His Shechinah (Divine Presence) to dwell among those below.

Through this they go from level to level, and each day they serve Hashem with greater understanding than before. Therefore they do teshuvah (repentance) for what came before, for they see that they fell short in their service.

This was the service of Avraham, as it is said (Nechemiah 8:9), "and You found his heart faithful," and regarding Moshe, who gave his life for Yisrael, it is said (Bamidbar 12:7), "in all My house he is faithful." But such was not the attribute of Noach; even though he was a perfectly righteous person (tzaddik gamur), we do not find that he prayed on behalf of his generation, and he acted only for himself. And his name indicates this about him — that he was "resting" (nach) at one level all his days, and even his good deeds had no power to protect, for they too were in the category of "nach" (resting, static), for any mitzvah that is not done with dechilu (awe) and rechimu (love) does not fly upward [Tikunei Zohar 25b].

And they said in the Zohar HaKadosh [vol. 3, 219a] that this is why Yisrael sway themselves during prayer and Torah study, for "the soul of man is the lamp of G-d," etc. — but when one performs a mitzvah or prayer without vitality, he is "nach" (still) and quiet, and also does not feel taste or satisfaction (nachas ruach) in performing the mitzvah, as it is written, "Taste and see that Hashem is good" — concerning which they said, "You shall see your world in your lifetime."

And one who does not taste, in this world, something resembling the World to Come — I do not know how he will be able to taste it in the future to come. For, in my opinion, on the contrary — when the Holy One, blessed be He, pours out upon such a person a spirit from on high, it is a punishment for him, as it is written (Nedarim 8b) that the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the sun out of its sheath, etc. — which I have explained in this manner.

This is what is meant by "These are the generations of Noach, Noach" — that is, his generations (offspring) and his good deeds were likewise in the aspect of rest and tranquility. And therefore they said [Bereishis Rabbah 29] that he found favor, but the Holy One, blessed be He, did not find [favor with him].

"A righteous man" — meaning, just as he was righteous while still being "a man," so too was he complete throughout his generations, in all three generations which he saw until the day of his death, as we find regarding Yechezkel — in all periods he was equally righteous, neither increasing nor decreasing.

And even "Noach walked with God" — that "he walked with the Lord" refers to the World to Come, as it is written, "I shall walk before the Lord," and "I will walk among you," which refers to the World to Come — in every place he was in the aspect of "rest" (noach).

And one may further explain "he walked with God" to mean that he served only out of fear, that he did everything for his own sake, and this is the aspect of fear.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)

