

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

UJHELY · YISMACH MOSHE, NOACH

Why does the Torah call Noach 'a man, righteous, perfect'?

Yismach Moshe

Tzaddik (righteous) and tamim (perfect) can never be absolute descriptions of a person's service of Hashem, since relative to His infinite greatness no human effort could ever measure up; rather, "ish" (a man) teaches that Noach was deemed righteous and perfect only in relation to his own human capacity, and this is why even Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov could not be vindicated if judged by the standard of Hashem's own greatness rather than by their own human measure. AI SUMMARY

Noach was a righteous man, perfect (Bereishit 6:9). Now, at first glance, it would have sufficed to say "Noach was righteous, perfect" — why does it say "a man"? The explanation is based on what is written (Tehillim 7:9): "Judge me, Hashem, according to my righteousness, and according to my perfection that is upon me." The gist of the matter is this: in relation to His greatness and honor, there is no measure to how one ought to serve Him; but in relation to the one serving, according to his own power and wisdom, there is a measure. If so, the term "tamim" (perfect/complete) cannot apply to the servant in relation to the One served, who is without end; rather, the term "tamim" can only be conceived in relation to the servant himself. Therefore, one could

not say "a righteous man, perfect" to mean that the service was complete in an absolute sense — only "a man, righteous, perfect," meaning: according to his own personhood, inasmuch as he was a man, he was righteous and perfect.

On this basis is explained what they said (Erchin 17a): If the Holy One, blessed be He, were to come into judgment with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, they would not be able to be vindicated. That is to say: if the Holy One, blessed be He, were to come specifically according to the measure of His own greatness in judgment, then they would not be able to be vindicated. And understand this well.

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

