

# Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778\*

## Chapter II: Noah (Gen. 6:9–11:32)

### Essay 1. The offspring of Noah

**פסוק** "אלה תולדת נח" פרש רש"י, הואיל והזכירו ספר בשבחו, דבר אחר למדך שעקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים עכ"ל. מקשים מה צריך הנה להזכיר נח דמשום זה הצריך לספר בשבחו, לא יזכירו ולא יספר בשבחו שהרי כל הפסוק הוא מיותר.

Regarding the verse, **“These are the offspring of Noah; Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God,”**<sup>1</sup> The Torah told us of the human offspring of Noah at the end of the previous parashah, Gen. 5:32, and here the verse first mentions offspring but then switches to talk about Noah’s positive qualities. **Rashi explains: “Since the text mentions him, it sings his praise,** in accordance with what is said, ‘The mention of the righteous shall be for a blessing.’<sup>2</sup> **Another explanation: To teach you that the real offspring of righteous people are their good deeds.”**<sup>3</sup>

**People question what need there was to mention Noah, such that because of this it was necessary to sing his praise. It could have not mentioned him and not sung his praise, for the entire the verse is apparently superfluous.**

ועוד קשה הסמיכות של הפסוק זה לסוף הפרשה של מעלה דכתיב "ונח מצא חן בעיני ה'", ואם נצולו גם הבנים הנה לו לומר "ונח ובניו מצאו חן בעיני ה'", ולמה אמר "ונח מצא חן" דמשמע נח לבדו. והלא גם הבנים צריכו לומר שהיו צדיקים שהרי כתיב "אלה תולדת נח" ואמרינו במדרש כל מקום שנאמר "אלה", פסל את הראשונים. זה דור המבול. אלא דגם על זה המדרש הקשה ה"פ תאר דבשלקמא "אלה תולדות השמים והארץ" גיחא דקמשמע לן שהנה בונה עולמות ומחריב וכו' (שם ג' ט), אבל פסול דור המבול אמאי איצטריך לאשמועינן והלא ידוע הוא מרשעם וממה שנגזר עליהם..

**Another difficulty is the proximity of this verse to the end of the preceding parasha, reading, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the L-rd.”**<sup>4</sup> **As the sons were also to survive the Flood, it should have said, “But Noah and his sons found favor in the eyes of the L-rd.” Why does it say, “But Noah found favor,” which has the meaning of Noah alone? Also regarding the sons, isn’t it necessary to say that they were righteous, for it is written, “These are the**

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 6:9.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. 10:7.

<sup>3</sup> Rashi on Gen. 6:9.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 6:8.

offspring of Noah,” and it is said in the Midrash: “Rabbi Abbahu said: **Wherever ‘these’ is written, it disqualifies the preceding** [from being included in the group] . . . Here, ‘these’ is written, so it disqualifies the preceding. What does it disqualify? **The generation of the Flood.**”<sup>5</sup>

Rather, the *Yefeh To’ar*<sup>6</sup> also questions about this Midrash, that granted, the use of the word “these” in the text “**These are the generations of heaven and earth,**”<sup>7</sup> is fine, for it comes to tell us that [G-d] “**was creating worlds and destroying them, until He created this world, and He said, ‘These please me, but those did not please Me.’**”<sup>8</sup> **But regarding the disqualification of the generation of the Flood, why was it necessary to inform us, for wasn’t it well known about their wickedness and what was decreed upon them?**

וְנִשׁ לֹאמַר שֶׁהוּא אֵיל שְׁמִצִּינוּ שְׁמִי הַמְּבוּל נִקְרָאוּ מִי נִחַ לְגִנּוּתוֹ שֶׁל נֹחַ, הֵייתִי אוֹמֵר שְׁנֵחַ אֶף עַל פִּי שֶׁהִנֵּה צְדִיק לֹא הָיָה אֶהוּב לְפָנַי הַמָּקוּם לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא הִתְפַּלֵּל עַל בְּנֵי דוּרוֹ, וְלֹא נִצּוּל אֶלָּא מְשׁוּם קִיּוּם הַמַּיִן וְהָעוֹלָם, מְשׁוּם הִכִּי הִצְרָךְ לֹאמַר "וְנִחַ מְצָא חֵן" שֶׁמִּכָּל מְקוּם הַקֵּב"ה הָיָה אוֹהֵב אוֹתוֹ.

It can be said that since we find that the waters of the Flood are called “the waters of Noah,”<sup>9</sup> to the disparagement of Noah, I might say that Noah—even though he was righteous—was not loved by the Omnipresent, because he did not pray for the people of his generation. That is, I might say that he was only saved because of G-d’s desire for the continued existence of the human race and the world. Because of this possibility, and to disprove it, it was necessary to say, “**But Noah found favor in the eyes of the L-rd,**” to teach that regardless, the Holy One, Blessed be He, did still love him.

וְכַתֵּב רַש"י ז"ל עַל פְּסוּק "וַיְהִי־נֹחַ בֶּן־חָמֶשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה" שֶׁהַקֵּב"ה כָּבַשׁ מֵעֵינָיו שֶׁל נֹחַ שֶׁלֹּא יוֹלִיד קוֹדֵם כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה נֶפֶת הַגְּדוֹל שֶׁבְּבָנָיו רְאוּי לְעוֹנֵשׁוֹן לְפָנַי הַמְּבוּל עַכ"ל. וְאִם כֵּן בְּנֵי נֹחַ אֵינָם רְאוּיִים לְהַקְרָא לֹא צְדִיקִים וְלֹא רְשָׁעִים שֶׁהָרִי דִּינָם כַּקְטָנִים, וּמְשׁוּם הִכִּי לֹא אָמַר הַכָּתוּב "וְנִחַ וּבְנָיו מְצָאוּ חֵן" שֶׁהָרִי אֵינָם רְאוּיִים לְקַדֵּשׁ, וְיֵמֵהוּ שֶׁנִּצּוּלוֹ לֹא לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ צְדִיקִים אֶלָּא לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ רְשָׁעִים.

Rashi, of blessed memory, wrote on the verse, “**When Noah had lived 500 years, Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth,**”<sup>10</sup> “**that the Holy One, Blessed be he, restrained him from having children earlier, in order that Japheth, the oldest [of his sons] should not reach the punishable age before the Flood.** For it is written, ‘No more shall there be an infant or graybeard who does not live out their lifetime; someone who dies at 100 years shall be reckoned a youth,’<sup>11</sup> meaning, that in the future, one will only become of punishable age when he reaches 100. This was the case, also, before the giving of the Torah.” I.e., if Noah had sons earlier, they would have

<sup>5</sup> Gen. Rabbah 30:3.

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac Ashkenazi Jaffe (1525–95), *Yafeh To’ar* (Venice 1597).

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 2:4.

<sup>8</sup> Eccl. Rabbah 3:11.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 54:9; Zohar I:67b.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 5:32.

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 65:20.

been over 100 years of age by the time of the Flood, and they would have been liable for punishment for their sins.

**If so, the sons of Noah do not deserve to be called either righteous or wicked, because their legal status is as youth. That is why the Scripture did not say, “But Noah and his sons found favor in the eyes of the L-rd,” for they were not suitable for this praise, and the fact that they survived wasn’t because they were righteous, rather because they were not wicked.**

ולפי שיש להקשות שאם פן גם שאר קטנים שלא הגיעו לכלל ענשים למה נימוחו, משום הכי בא הכתוב לתרץ "אלה תולדת נח", שהטעם שנצולו הוא לפי שהיו בני נח ונהו פסל את הראשונים. וקשה ומאי אולמיה דנח להגין אף על בניו שהרי די הנה שומצא סן פדי להציל את עצמו, ומירץ "איש צדיק תמים הנה", לא די שומצא סן אלא שהנה אף צדיק תמים בדרתיו, ונהו שכתב רש"י הואיל ונהזכירו ספר בשבחו.

**We can question, that if so, regarding also the other youths who did not reach the status of guilty—why were they dissolved in the Flood? Because of this, Scripture came to answer, “These are the offspring of Noah,” that the reason that they were saved is because they were sons of Noah. “This qualified the preceding” means to disqualify the minors of the generation besides the sons of Noah. Thus, even though Noah’s sons did not find favor in G-d’s eyes, they were saved because they were his sons.**

**How did Noah have the power to save his sons, for the fact that he found favor should have been enough to save only him. The answer is that “Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generation.” Not only did he find favor, rather that he was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. This was what Rashi meant when he wrote, “Since the text mentions him, it sings his praise.”**

ואחר כך כתב, דבר אחר למדך שעקר תולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים, דלעולם אימא לה שהבנים לא נצולו בזכות אביהם, אלא שמקטנוותם נפר שנוטים להיות צדיקים, כדאמרנו בעלמא (ברכות דף מ"ח ע"א) בוצין בוצין מקטפיה ודיע. ומשום הכי נצולו, מה שאין פן שאר הקטנים שאדרבא היו נוטים למעשה הרשעים, ולא הנה אצטרף קרא למימר "אלה תולדת נח" פדי לפסל שאר הקטנים דמילתא דפשיטא היא.

**Afterward, [Rashi] wrote, “Another explanation: To teach you that the point of mentioning the offspring of the righteous are their good deeds.” Actually, I will say to you that the children were not saved by the merit of their fathers; rather that from their youths it was recognized that they are inclined to be righteous, as it is said in the world, “A cucumber can be recognized from its blossoming [stage].”<sup>12</sup> Because of that, they were saved, which is not the case for the other young people, who to the contrary were inclined to acts of wickedness, and it was not necessary for Scripture to say “these are the offspring of Noah” in order to exclude the remaining young people, for this matter is obvious.**

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<sup>12</sup> Berachot 48a.

והאי דקאמר "אלה תולדת נח" היינו המעשים טובים של נח, כדסיים "איש צדיק תמים" שהם עקר תולדותיהם של הצדיקים, והמעשים טובים של האב הועילו לאלו הבנים שאף בקטנותם הדריכו עצמם בדרך ישרה. ומאי דאמר "אלה" פסל את הראשונים היינו שאר הבנים, שאף על פי שהיו קטנים והיו ראויים להנצל מפל מקום הואיל שהיו אוחזים מעשה אבותיהם לפי שאבותיהם הדריכו בדרך הרעה משום הכי נאבדו. ונמצא שהמעשים של האבות הם העקר של התולדת, ולפי שעדין לא היו צדיקים ממש שהרי אינם בני עונשין משום הכי לא אומר "ונח ובניו מצאו חן".

**It stated, "These are the offspring of Noah" because of the good deeds of Noah, as it concluded, "he was a righteous man, blameless," which as Rashi wrote means that good deeds are the real offspring of righteous people, and the good deeds of the father benefitted those sons, who even in their youths behaved themselves in a straight path.**

Regarding what [Rabbi Abbahu] said: "Wherever 'these' is written, it disqualifies the preceding," which meant the remaining sons of that generation, for even though they were also youths and they were fit to be saved, in any case since they adhered to the actions of their fathers, because their fathers acted in an evil manner, because of this, they were lost.

**It's found that the actions of the fathers are the real offspring, and since [Noah's sons] were not yet actually righteous, as they were not of an age to be punished, because of this, it did not say, "And Noah and his sons found favor."**

ועוד יש לומר שכתב הפסוק "אלה תולדת נח" אף על פי שכתב פתח "ויולד נח את-שם" וכו', משום דאיתא בסנהדרין פ"ק ח"ה ע"א (דף ק"ח ע"א) והכי נמי במדרש (בראשית רבה ל' ז') שדור המבול לא היתה פונתם אלא למטעת פרמים שלא היו מכונים להעמיד בנים. אבל נח היתה פונתו להוליד בנים ולפרות ולרבות, ומשום הכי דור המבול פתוב בהו "ויולד" וכו' דהינו דמעצמו הוליד בלי פונה רק דרך הטבע, אבל בנח פתוב ביה "אלה תולדת" לפי שהיתה פונתו להעמיד תולדת.

**It can also be said that the verse "These are the offspring of Noah" was written even though it was already written in the previous parashah, "Noah begot: Shem, Ham, and Japheth."<sup>13</sup> That is because it is brought in tractate Sanhedrin, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter entitled, "All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come," and it is also written in the Midrash,<sup>14</sup> that the only intent of the generation of the Flood was to plant vineyards, i.e., to engage in marital relations only for pleasure, as they did not intend to have children.**

**But Noah's intention was to beget sons, to be fruitful and multiply. Because of this, in the generation of the Flood, it was initially written about [the average man] that "he begot," that he begot children in the natural way, without any special intention. But specifically for Noah, it is also written, "these are the offspring," because it was his intent to raise offspring.**

The Torah twice mentions that Noah begot three sons. At the end of the last parashah, Gen. 5:32, it states, "When Noah had lived 500 years, Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth." Then in this parashah, immediately after stating, "These are the offspring of Noah, Noah was a righteous man, perfect in his generation; Noah walked with G-d," Scripture states in Gen. 6:10, "Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth." The repetition of Noah's fathering these three sons, and the juxtaposition of the second mention occurring right after mentioning Noah's righteousness, demonstrates that he intended to father children, rather than it happening by chance.

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<sup>13</sup> Gen. 5:32.

<sup>14</sup> Gen. Rabbah 30:2.