

Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



The Parasha Post of Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital

Parashat Noach
October 21, 2017

פרשת נח
א' בחשון תשע"ח

Torah Reading: *Bereshit* (Genesis) 6:9-11:32
Maftir for Rosh Chodesh: *Bemidbar* (Numbers) 28:9-15

In this *parasha*, we hear the story of Noach and the flood, its aftermath when Noach planted a vineyard and got inebriated and his son saw “his nakedness,” and finally, the story of the Tower of Babel and the birth of Avram.

The Noach flood story is a transitional story, which we can see by looking at the episodes that come before and after. In many ways, it shares features with both the *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden) story (chapters 1-3) and the *S'dom V'Amorah* (Sodom and Gomorrah) story (chapter 19).

Here is the sequence of events in the story of *Gan Eden*:

- Hashem covered the world in water: “...there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.” (2:6)
- God formed man from the dust of the earth and “breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**...” (2:7)
- The **animals and fowls** of the air were named (2:19-20)
- Adam and Chava were commanded to “...**be fruitful and multiply** and replenish the earth.” (1:28)
- Because of their sin, Adam and Chava were removed from a **pure, perfect world and taken to an impure, imperfect world.**

Compare this to the story of Noach and his wife:

- Because of their righteousness, Noach and his wife were saved from a **corrupt, violent, and wicked world and removed to a clean, new world.**

- They went into the ark “...two and two of all living things, wherein is the **breath of life.**” (7:15)
- They took with them all the **animals and fowls** of the earth. (7:9)
- Once the flood was over they were commanded to “...**be fruitful and multiply** upon the earth.” (8:17)

In a way, Noah and his wife became a second Adam and Chava, beginning over again in a clean and pure world.

At the same time, Noah and his wife also parallel Lot and his wife in the S’dom and Amorah story, though with one startling difference. Lot, like Noah, was saved because of his righteousness relative to those around him, and his offspring – for Lot, two daughters, and for Noah, three sons – were saved by the merit of their father, in whose custody they still were. However, in contrast to Noah’s unnamed wife, who went along with all that Hashem had commanded her husband, Lot’s unnamed wife turned around to look at the destruction of S’dom and Amorrhah, in violation of what was commanded to her husband, and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

The juxtaposition of these three stories tells us, among other things, that Hashem continues to give chances to an errant world and that our human progress is not linear, but always features ups and downs in our quest for ultimate moral perfection.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- What other lessons can we draw from the juxtaposition of these similar stories?
- Why do you think that Mrs. Noah and Mrs. Lot are not given individual names in the text?
- Discuss the idea that in all three stories, Hashem is destroying something.