

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

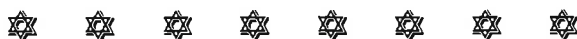
MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

No'ach—Genesis 6:9-22

Dibuk Chaverim—Connection of Friends

...Key KOSHI...

WHERE does Noah's righteousness & his "walking with God" lead?
WHAT is Noah's lesson for living in our world as chaverim?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

6:9] This is Noah's chronicle. Noah was a righteous man; in his generation, he was above reproach; Noah walked with God. 10] Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

11]The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with violence, 12] and when God saw how corrupted the earth was, how all flesh was acting in a corrupt way upon the earth, 13] God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come [to mind] before Me, because the earth is full of violence on their account; look, now—I am going to wipe them off the earth. 14] Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make the ark with rooms, and cover it with tar inside and out. 15] This is how to make it: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. 16] Make a roof for the ark, making it overhang from above by a cubit. Put the ark's door in its side, and make a bottom, a second, and a third deck.

17] "As for Me, I am going to bring the floodwaters upon the earth to destroy all that lives under the heavens, [all] that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth shall expire. 18] With you, though, I will establish My covenant: go then into the ark—you, your wife, your sons, and their wives with you. 19] And take two each of every living creature—of all flesh—into the ark, male and female to keep them alive along with you: 20] every type of bird, every, every type of beast, every type of creeping thing—let two of each come to you to keep them alive, 21] and take along edible foodstuffs of every kind; gather them up so that there is food for yourself and for them." 22] And Noah did just as God had commanded him: that is what he did."

9 אֱלֹהִים תּוֹלְדֹת לֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה
בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ: 10 וַיּוֹלֵד לֹחַ
שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת׃
11 וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ
חָמָס׃ 12 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה
נִשְׁחַתָּה כִּי־הִשְׁחִית כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֶת־דַּרְכָּו עַל־
הָאָרֶץ׃ 13 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קַח־כָּל־בָּשָׂר בְּךָ
לִפְנֵי כִּי־מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּנִי
מִשְׁחִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ׃ 14 עֲשֵׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי־גֹפֶר
קָנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַתֵּבָה וְכִפַּרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבִּיַּת
וּמִחוּץ בְּכֹפֶר׃ 15 וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ
מֵאוֹת אַמָּה אֶרֶךְ הַתֵּבָה חֲמֵשִׁים אַמָּה רְחֹבָהּ
וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה קוֹמָתָה׃ 16 צֹהַר | תַּעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה
וְאֶל־אַמָּה תִּכְלְנָה מִלְּמַעַלָּה וַיִּפְתַּח הַתֵּבָה בְּצִדָּהּ
תַּשְׁעִים תַּחְתֵּימָם שְׁנָיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂה׃
17 וַאֲנִי הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־הַמַּבּוּל מֵיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ
לִשְׁחַת כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת
הַשָּׁמַיִם כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ׃ 18 וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־
בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ וּבֵאת אֶל־הַתֵּבָה אֹתָהּ וּבִנְיָתָהּ
וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּנְשֵׁי־בְנֵיךָ אִתְּךָ׃ 19 וּמִכָּל־חַיִּי מִכָּל־
בָּשָׂר שְׁנָיִם מִכָּל תֵּבִיא אֶל־הַתֵּבָה לְהַחֲיֹת אִתְּךָ
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה יִהְיוּ׃ 20 מִהָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ וּמִן־
הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ מִכָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ
שְׁנָיִם מִכָּל יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ לְהַחֲיֹת׃ 21 וְאִתְּךָ קַח־
לָךְ מִכָּל־מֵאֲכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל וְאִסַּפְתָּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה
לָךְ וּלְהֵם לְאֹכְלָהּ׃ 22 וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכֹל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים כִּן עָשָׂה׃

בְּרַחֵם אֲתָם׃ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ חַוְדָּסִים אֲשֶׁר קִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַרְגֵי תוֹרָה.
Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'zivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallow us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...Acquiring Torah...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. -R' Avi Fertig

v.9 This is the line of Noah—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God

RAMBAN... “*Tsodik Tamim*” That is, “perfectly righteous.” One who is strict in the imperative of justice...Yet Abraham surpassed Noah, for to the pursuit of justice he added mercy...

RASHI... “*B’dorotav*” There are those who expound this in praise saying, ‘All the more so if he had been in a generation of the righteous.’ And there are those who expound it in deprecation, saying, ‘According to the standards of his generation, he was righteous, but if he had been in the generation of Abraham, he would not have been thought of as anything.’

B’REISHIT RABBAH... “*Noah walked with God.*” R’ Judah said: This may be compared to a king who had two sons, one grown up and the other a child. To the child he said, “Walk with me,” but to the adult, “Walk before me.” Similarly, to Abraham, whose moral strength was great, God said, “*Walk yourself before Me.*” [Gen 17:1] Of Noah, whose strength was feeble, it says “*Noah walked with God.*”

ALSHECH... “*Noah walked with God.*” That is, Noah practiced his religion as between himself and God. He did not engage in teaching or preaching or trying to persuade his peers of his convictions.

RADAK... He clung to God with his every step, unaffected by the people around him.

TARGUM... “Noah walked in the fear of God.”

K’TAV SOFER...Noah was absolutely right in maintaining the wall of separation between himself and the corrupt generation in which he found himself...For if he went outside to battle the prevailing winds, his own children might be cast beyond the pale. The risk just wasn’t worth it...

v.13-14 God said to Noah: I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them—thus I shall destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood...and cover it with pitch inside and out...

ETZ HAYIM...God speaks to Noah directly seven times in this narrative. In the Mesopotamian tales, the decision of the gods to destroy the world, intended to be kept secret, was revealed by one of the gods to a specific individual...Here, Noah never responds.

RASHI... Why did God trouble Noah with this construction? So that the people of the Generation of the Flood should see him busy with building the ark for 120 years and ask: “Of what use is this to you?” Then he would reply: “In the time to come, the Holy One is going to bring a flood upon the earth.” Thus, through the construction of the ark, they might repent.

ALSHECH...Since Noah was content to be “righteous” within his own four walls, but had not tried to connect with others or improve the morals of his fellows, he would now remain within the four walls of the ark... Since he failed to shepherd other human beings, he would now shepherd every animal... “*So Noah did, just as God commanded.*” [6:22]

TALMUD...[Ta’anit, 23a]

Once it happened that almost all Adar no rain had fallen. The people sent a message to Choni HaM’agel: Pray that rain might fall. He thereupon drew a circle and stood therein, saying: “I will stand upon my watch until You, O God, have mercy upon your children, and rains fall.” At first but a drip, then rain began to fill the cisterns...The rain came down with great force. His disciples cried: Master, save us from death. The rain will destroy the world! In the same way you prayed for rain to fall, pray that it now cease! Choni replied: I know that one may not pray in excess of a good thing... So Choni brought a bullock as Thanksgiving offering...and the clouds were dispersed and the sun shone...

R’ Yochanan said: Choni, the righteous one, was troubled his whole life about the verse: “When the Lord brought back the returnees to Zion, we were like those who dream.” One day Choni was on a journey and spied a man planting a carob tree. He asked: How long does it take for a carob to bear fruit? The planter replied: Some 70 years. And you think you will live another 70? The man replied: I found carob trees my forefathers planted, so I plant for my children. Choni sat down thereafter on that road to eat, but sleep overcame him...and he continued to sleep for 70 years. Waking up, he saw a man gathering carob and asked: Did you plant this tree? The young man replied: No, but my grandfather did. I must have slept 70 years! Choni thought to himself, but he could not believe it...So he ran back home, asking, Is this the house of Choni? No, the neighbor said, this is his grandson’s house. But I am Choni! No one believed him. So he went to the Bet Midrash and overheard the discussion, “This is the Law, clear to us as in the day of Choni Ha-M’agel.” So he called out: I am Choni...! Yet they could not believe it was true...Bereft of the bonds that sustained him all his days, of friendship and love...Wounded deeply he exclaimed: *O-Chevrutah, O-Mitutah—Give me friendship or give me death.*” And at that instant, he expired.

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

Rabbi MARC ANGEL

...I imagine that Noah was universally despised by the members of his society. They must have been irked by Noah's refusal to follow in the idolatrous and sinful behaviors that were the norms for everyone else. Noah must have been ostracized as a self-righteous, arrogant man who thought himself too good to mingle with others. People don't like a "goody-goody" who shuns their way of life....Did Noah have any real friends? Could Noah trust anyone? Perhaps his family members provided "safe space" for him; but everywhere else he was a pariah, a non-conformist, a righteous and pure person in a world of evil and impurity. Such isolation can surely be devastating. How did Noah find the inner strength to cope? How did he remain righteous and pure, when it would have been so much easier and so much more comfortable to go along with the corrupt and sinful patterns that prevailed in his world?

One answer is suggested in the opening verse of this week's Parasha: "*Noah walked with God.*" Noah stayed focused on his relationship with God. This single-minded spiritual sense allowed him not to be shaken or troubled by what humans say or do. Noah was not seeking popularity or comradeship with people; he was seeking to be righteous and pure in the eyes of God. By keeping focused on the eternal, he was able to transcend the ugliness and evil of everyday life in his society. As the Talmudic sage Akavia ben Mahalalel taught: it is better to be deemed a fool in the eyes of humans, rather than to be a fool in the eyes of God for even an instant. Ultimately, we are not answerable to our fellow human-beings, especially not to the evil ones: we are answerable to God, and must live with that idea clearly in mind.

Rabbi LAWRENCE HOFFMAN

"*These are the offspring of Noah: Noah, a righteous man, was perfect among his generation.*" To begin with, Noah's "perfection" is only relative: he was "perfect" only "*among his generation.*" Negatively speaking, Noah wasn't very good at all; he just looked perfect compared to everybody else at the time. In his favor, however, we might say that given the absence of morality all around him, it is remarkable how righteous he managed to be. Either way, we learn that Noah was acutely aware of the people among whom he lived....He measured himself by what he saw others do, and managed to rise above them.

The question is how he did it, to which the rest of the verse is a response: "*Noah walked with God.*" The rabbis ask what this might mean. Later, Abraham is instructed, "*Walk before Me,*" but there, God charges Abraham to come forward and present himself, whereas here, Noah actually goes for a walk with God!....."Where did they walk?" the rabbis ask. We know where God and Noah walked. With the Generation of the Flood, too, God must have "*descended,*" going for walks among the people. What made Noah special was his penchant for walking among the people, but only with God at his side, so that he could understand what they were doing but see it from the perspective of divine morality.

Until such time as the messianic age arrives, there will always be injustice around. I don't mean just murder and mayhem and such...I have in mind the less obvious human foibles to which we all are prone: supporting politicians who pander to our self-interest...or the tiny temptations like gossip and losing our temper...Noah achieved relative perfection because he *walked with God.* ...It is not too late for Jewish New Year's resolutions. So, I resolve this year to strive for *relative perfection* by taking more walks *with God.* I will be less busy at my self-centered solitary pursuits, less hasty to judge others from afar, and quicker to muster the little acts of decency that would

never occur to me if I never went walking where the people are...So this year, look for me among the people: sharing morning coffee with my students, talking to shopkeepers who people the neighborhood, showing kindness to the ever-present homeless, and just plain walking the streets of Manhattan to see what people are doing. When you see me, look carefully, because there is a better than even chance that God is walking by my side.

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...*

Practice doesn't involve seeking some sort of spiritual generator to fill you with light, because all the holiness you need already lives within you. ...Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your life.

Alan MORINIS... That's how important friendship is to spiritual life...It's too common a story, though, that people seem to commit a kind of suicide by cutting themselves off. They judge others and recoil, or...they judge themselves and withdraw. Either way, they impose solitary confinement on themselves...

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe taught that there are two parallel worlds, and it's up to us to choose which one we live in. The World of Friendship—*Olam HaYedidut* brings with it love, joy, optimism, harmony, generosity and faith. The alternate World of Estrangement—*Olam HaZarut* is characterized by animosity, anger, blame, anxiety, sadness and fear...Choni chose death rather than live outside the World of Friendship...Whether in the Study Hall or in other areas of life, friends can disagree...As the Talmud warns: "Just as fire does not ignite itself, so too, the words of Torah do not endure with a person who studies alone." We gain so much from having friends to accompany us on our spiritual path. The journey is not always smooth or easy. There are bumps, detours... along the way. We stumble and fall. Yet the help and support we receive from our *chaverim* gives us strength and reminds us of our purpose...

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassover commented that he learned the true nature of friendship from two drunken men in a tavern. Moved by the wine, he asked his friend: Tell me, do you love me? The other replied: Of course, I love you. To which the first man replied: You say that you love me, but do you know what I need? The other had not a word to say...To which his friend responded: If you were my true friend—if you really loved me, you would know what I truly need.

Then the one who posed the question fell silent. [Hasidic Tales, Vol II, pg 86, Buber/ *With Heart in Mind*, pg. 67-68]

PRACTICE...

Pirkei Avot teaches: "Find yourself a Teacher; Acquire for yourself a friend." [1:6]

WHO is your true friend and teacher....?

WHAT does their friendship teach you about the "you/friend" you can be?

⌘ Connect with your friend....TALK about where/who/why you are.....