

The Reason Noach Didn't Daven for Others to Be Saved

Chazal inform us that Noach opted not to daven for the people of his generation. The question is why.

Zera Shimshon quotes the Midrash to provide a possible reason. The Midrash states, “Hashem controls His anger against every type of sin except for immorality” (*Bereishis Rabbah* 26:10).

The main reason for prayer is to remind Hashem to have mercy even after a person has sinned beyond Hashem’s limit for patience and tolerance. But when the sin is one for which Hashem has no mercy, there is no place for prayer.

This was especially true for Noach’s generation, which was also guilty of overt thievery in addition to the terrible immorality that was prevalent in their lives. When it comes to sins between man and his fellow man, Hashem has no tolerance, and Noach therefore felt that davening for them would be of no help at all.

(זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ב)

The Absence of Noach’s Sons from the Praise

וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה'... נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו... (ו'ח-ט)
*Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem... Noach was a
 righteous man, perfect in his generations...*

Z*era Shimshon* points out that Noach’s three sons were saved from the flood along with Noach. If that was the case, why aren’t they mentioned when the Torah says that Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem?

Zera Shimshon explains that Noah's children were not true *tzaddikim*. True, they weren't like the rest of the world, who were completely wicked (even the children were being raised to become sinners), since Noah raised his children to walk the path of righteousness. However, since they were still relatively young at the time, they were not yet at the age of being punished by Heaven for their actions. The reason they were saved, then, was solely due to Noah's having found favor in Hashem's eyes, combined with the fact that he was doing his best to raise his children with the proper *chinuch* in a time of crisis.

This is why Noah alone was credited for being righteous, and the Torah makes no mention of his children and their behavior.

(זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות א)

Why the Generation of the Flood Was Punished

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים לִנְחָ קֹץ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר בָּא לְפָנַי כִּי מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ חֲמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם
וְהִנְנִי מְשַׁחִיתֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ (ו:ג).

Hashem said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery through them; and behold, I am about to destroy them from the earth."

M*aseches Sanhedrin* (108a) points out that the decree of destruction was signed and sealed only because the generation of the flood stole from one another.

Chazal used the word *nechtam*, "sealed," in connection with the decree that the world would be destroyed because of theft, but we know that they were being punished for immorality (*Rashi, Bereishis* 6:13)! What's more, the Torah itself seems to imply that the main problem with the generation of the flood was immorality, not theft.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 32a) discusses a *pasuk* (*Devarim* 1:1) that refers to Di Zahav, which seems to be a place name but which is interpreted as "di zahav—enough gold."

Moshe Rabbeinu is having a conversation with Hashem.

“*Ribbono shel Olam*,” he says. “The reason the Yidden made the *egel* was because of the incredible quantity of gold they received from You. It was so much that they said, ‘Enough!’”

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani says in the name of Rabbi Yonasan, “How do you know that Hashem agreed with Moshe? Because it says, ‘And they accumulated silver and gold and they made the Baal’ (*Hoshea* 2:10).”

When Hashem judged the generation of the flood for their abominable and immoral behavior, He knew that they could theoretically argue that they were compelled to sin by the incredible abundance of good in their lives, as the Gemara writes, “They had so much good, and Hashem even gave them a ‘taste’ of the World to Come!” (*Sanhedrin* 38a).

Things were so out of control that even the angels who were banished from Heaven and sent to earth as a punishment for bad behavior ended up sinning (*Bereishis* 6:2–4), and if that was the case, what could Hashem possibly expect from regular people?

This brings us back to the matter of their stealing.

Although the people of the flood may have been able to argue their way out of being punished for their immoral behavior, there was no way for them to argue their way out of being punished for theft. They were asking for a reprieve, claiming that it was too hard to live a moral life when surrounded by such an abundance of luxury. If that was the case, how could they possibly justify stealing? After all, they were all so wealthy!

You can’t have it both ways. Either steal because you need money, or live immorally because you have too much, but not both.

The fact that they stole, despite being so wealthy, proved that the real reason they were stealing was not because they were lacking anything, but because they wanted to anger the *Ribbono shel Olam*, which was why they deserved to be punished.

This was what *Chazal* meant when they said that their sentence was sealed because of the stealing. While it was true that their main transgression and subsequent punishment had to do with

immoral behavior, it was the stealing that stripped them of any sort of defense for their sins.

(זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ד)



The story of Noach and his generation is a story of people having too much and abusing their fellow man. Even Noach himself is taken to task for not doing enough for the people of his generation.

I want to share with you a story about a bachur who went out of his way to help others—not just materially but spiritually as well—and the beautiful result that ensued.



I was already what people call an “*alter bachur*.” I’d been around the block, not once or twice, but twenty times. At one point I met someone who asked me to begin spending time at a certain yeshivah that catered to *bachurim* from a country who were known to arrive at the yeshivah with not very much experience when it came to knowing how to learn.

And so it began.

One of the *bachurim* with whom I learned on a regular basis needed a lot of help, not only in developing a desire to learn and in understanding the basics of knowing how to learn, but even when it came to just reading the words in *lashon hakodesh*. In addition to all this, the boy also suffered from a medical problem and needed a doctor to administer shots on a regular basis. I felt bad for him and wanted to help him.

I decided that a good way to give this kid some “*cheishek*” would be by taking him on a tour of the astonishing world of *sefarim*. I wanted to show him up close and personal how incredibly vast this world is and how there have been *sefarim* written on every single topic in the Torah.

I told the *bachur* that I was taking him on a *sefarim* tour, and the two of us entered the Ohr HaChaim Center on Rechov Meah Shearim, a *sefarim* superstore in every sense of the word.

We entered, and I showed the *bachur* the huge selection of

sefarim in multiple languages and on a wide array of Torah topics. I wanted him to understand what rich Torah treasures we have, past and present. I showed him *sefarim* on *pilpul* and *iyun*, on *aggadah* and *halachah*, the classics that everyone is familiar with and the more diverse works that not many have ever been introduced to. I was hoping that he would be as impressed as I was and am, and maybe even a little bit emotional by the depths of the sea of Torah that *Klal Yisrael* has been swimming in for thousands of years.

You have to understand something.

This *bachur* barely knew how to read *lashon hakodesh*. He was not familiar with *sefarim*; they were not his friends. How could they have a relationship when he could barely formulate words in Hebrew? Who could blame him for not being more enthusiastic about learning?

But then something fascinating occurred.

While passing by one particular shelf, I happened to notice that it was filled with copies of *Zera Shimshon*. The *bachur* looked at the *sefarim* with curiosity before reaching up and removing one for closer perusal.

Not sure what to make of his behavior, I waited to see what was going to happen next.

Turning to me, he asked, "What is this *sefer*?"

Before I had a chance to reply, one of the salesmen who happened to overhear our conversation interjected and began giving us a synopsis of the *sefer* and what it was all about. He explained that *Zera Shimshon* is a *sefer* that is known to bring *yeshuos* to people who learn it, and that the store had received numerous sets to give out to anyone who promised to learn the *sefer* every day.

"I have also heard a lot about this *segulah*," I told the *bachur*, "and if you take the *sefer*, I will be happy to learn it with you *b'chavrusa* every day."

The second I made the offer to become his *Zera Shimshon* partner, you should have seen the sparkle that glistened in his eyes. I could see that he was filled with a sudden, newfound desire to learn. He accepted a set of *Zera Shimshon*, and we began our new learning *sefer* the next day.

It was an interesting thing.

After three weeks of steady learning, I got engaged.

That wasn't all.

My good friend, the *bachur* from abroad who had such a difficult time just reading *lashon hakodesh*, who was in physical pain on a daily basis, inexplicably saw a marked drop in the pain that had plagued him for so long. Soon he was feeling well enough that he no longer needed the shots he'd been getting just to get through the day. He still took a shot now and then, but it was nothing compared to what he'd needed before. Suddenly he was healthy and happy, and I couldn't ignore the reality of what I was witnessing with my own eyes. After all, I was now engaged, and he was learning with dedication and feeling better than he'd felt in years.

It's been a while since we've begun our learning *sefer*, but whenever I think about the events that transpired, I can't get over what occurred in the *sefarim* store. I still don't understand how the *bachur* on my *sefarim* tour happened to randomly notice *Zera Shimshon* out of the thousands of *sefarim* on the endless rows of shelves. It's especially difficult to comprehend when you remember that he had trouble even forming words in *lashon hakodesh* and wasn't the kind of person who could grasp the name of a *sefer* just like that. And yet, he had.

It was obvious to me that Hashem was at work here, wanting to give us both merits and salvation, which came about through our learning of an extraordinary *sefer*.