

Parsha QA



Parshas Noach

For the week ending 4 Cheshvan 5759
23 & 24 October 1998

Parsha Questions

1. Which particular sin sealed the fate of the flood generation?
2. Why did Hashem tell Noach to build an ark, as opposed to saving him via some other method?
3. The ark had three levels. What function did each level serve?
4. What indication do we have that Noach was familiar with the Torah?
5. Why did Hashem postpone bringing the flood for seven days?
6. Why did the first water of the flood come down as light rain?
7. What did people say that threatened Noach, and what did Hashem do to protect him?
8. What grouping of creatures escaped the punishment of the flood?
9. How deeply was the ark submerged in the water?
10. What did the olive branch symbolize?
11. How long did the punishment of the flood last?
12. A solar year is how many days longer than a lunar year?
13. When did humans receive permission to eat meat?
14. What prohibition was given along with the permission to eat meat?
15. Why does the command to "be fruitful and multiply" directly follow the prohibition of murder?
16. Name two generations in which the rainbow never appeared.
17. Why did Noach curse Canaan specifically? Give two reasons.
18. Why does the Torah call Nimrod a mighty hunter?
19. The sin of the generation of the dispersion was greater than the sin of the generation of the flood. Why was the punishment of the former less severe?
20. Why was Sarah also called *Yiscah*?

Sherlox Holmes and The Flood Mystery

"I'm puzzled," said Watstein as he peered into the text and read: "And G-d said to Noach: ...Behold, I shall destroy them from the earth....Make yourself an ark....And I, behold, I am going to bring a flood...." (Bereishis 6:17)

"What puzzles you?" asked world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.

"Rashi's comment puzzles me," said Watstein. Rashi says: G-d had many ways in which to save Noach, so why trouble him to build an ark? So that the people would see Noach building the ark and ask what he was doing; when Noach would answer that G-d is bringing a flood to destroy them, perhaps they would repent."

"Rashi is simply explaining why G-d saved Noach via an ark, and not via some other method," said Sherlock.

"Look here, Mr. Holmes. Whatever method G-d chooses to do something, we can always ask: Why not some other method? For example, when G-d made leather garments for Adam and Chava, we could ask: Why leather? Why not some other material? This line of questioning, although interesting, is endless. And it is not Rashi's style. Rashi never comments unless something in the text impels him to do so. So why here does Rashi comment?"

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Answer

“Look at the verses, Watstein,” said Sherlock. “First, G-d tells Noah that the world will be destroyed. But G-d doesn’t say how it will be destroyed. Then, G-d tells Noah to build an ark. Finally, G-d declares that there will be a flood.”

“Hmm. It is a bit peculiar,” said Watstein. “The command to build the ark is surrounded by two statements about the destruction.”

“Therefore,” said Sherlock, “Rashi understands that the first statement is G-d’s decision to destroy the world, but only if the people don’t repent. Then, Noah is commanded to build an ark, whose purpose is to get the people to repent. Then, if that fails, ‘Behold, I am going to bring a flood...’ ”

(Maskil L’David; “Sherlock” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

In Hebrew, “ark” and “word” are synonymous. Furthermore, the ark’s dimensions were 30 x 300 x 50. These numbers correspond to the Hebrew letters “lamed shin nun” which spell “lashon” — “tongue.” The true “ark” which saved Noah and family were the words of prayer they uttered with their tongues.

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

6:19	Miracle of the Ark
7:1	Preserving the World
8:11	The Olive Leaf
9:12	The Rainbow
9:18	Ham and Canaan
10:9	Nimrod
10:15	The Land of Canaan
11:32	The Death of Terach

Sforno

8:21	The New World
8:22	The Pre-Flood World
9:6	The Crime of Murder
9:9	The Conditions of the Covenant
9:13	Meaning of the Rainbow

Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 6:13 - Robbery.
2. 6:14 - So that people would see Noah building the ark and ask him what he was doing. When Noah would answer, “Hashem is bringing a flood,” it might encourage some people to repent.
3. 6:16 - The top level housed the people, the middle level housed the animals, and the bottom level, the refuse.
4. 7:2 - Hashem told him to take into the ark seven of each kosher-type animal, and two of each non-kosher type. “Kosher” and “non-kosher” are Torah concepts.
5. 7:4 - To allow seven days to mourn the death of Mesushelach.
6. 7:12 - To give the generation a chance to repent.
7. 7:13,15 - People said, “If we see him going into the ark, we’ll smash it!” Hashem surrounded it with bears and lions to kill any attackers.
8. 7:22 - The fish.
9. 8:4 - Eleven amos.
10. 8:11 - Nothing. It was a leaf, not a branch. (The olive leaf symbolized that it’s better to eat food “bitter like an olive” but which comes directly from Hashem, rather than sweet food provided by humans.)
11. 8:14 - A full solar year.
12. 8:14 - Eleven days.
13. 9:3 - After the flood.
14. 9:4 - The prohibition of eating a limb cut from a living animal.
15. 9:7 - To equate one who purposely abstains from having children to one who commits murder.
16. 9:12 - The generation of King Chizkiyahu and the generation of Shimon bar Yochai.
17. 9:22,24 - Because Canaan is the one who revealed Noah’s disgrace to Ham. And because Ham stopped Noah from fathering a fourth son. Thus, Noah cursed Ham’s fourth son, Canaan.
18. 10:9 - He used words to ensnare the minds of people, persuading them to rebel against Hashem.
19. 11:9 - They lived together peacefully.
20. 11:29 - The word “Yisrah” is related to the Hebrew word “to see.” Sarah was called Yisrah because she could “see” the future via prophecy. Also, because of her beauty, everyone would gaze at her.