

YAVNEH STUDIES IN NOACH

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On the *pasuk* "Noach was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generations" (Gen. 6:9), Rashi comments:

Some of the sages interpret [the phrase "in his generation"] as praise - had Noach lived in a generation of righteous men, he would have been even more righteous; and some interpret [the phrase] as criticism - by the standards of his generation he was righteous, but had he lived in Avraham's generation, he would not have been considered at all.

The explanation for the critical evaluation of Noach as contrasted to Avraham has been given by the commentaries in the analogy to a person sitting in an unheated room on a cold wintery day. He has two alternatives: he can put on a warm, heavy garment or he can light a fire or oven. The distinction between the alternatives is that should he choose to put on an overcoat, though he would be comfortable, all those in his proximity would be as cold as before; indeed, the sight of him in his comfort would make them feel the chill all the more by contrast. On the other hand, should he elect to bring warmth not to himself but to the room, everyone with him would share in the warmth he caused.

Both Noach and Avraham found themselves in similar circumstances. Both were unique in that they lived in eras in which Hashem had been forgotten, and they alone were cognizant of His existence and of the fact that the sole purpose of man's existence is to do His will. The distinction between them was that Noach "put on an overcoat" - he was content to be righteous while the rest of humanity continued in the error of its ways, a path which led inevitably to total destruction. Avraham, though, did not rest on the laurels of his own righteousness, but sought to make the truth known to all who came under his influence. He "kindled a fire" which was a source of light and warmth for all who came in contact with him.

NOACH

5

A question nonetheless remains in examining the criticism of our sages. Had the order of generations been reversed, had Avraham preceded Noach by ten generations, we could understand that Noach could be considered to have fallen short of the standards of Avraham. Since Noach was the predecessor, however, how can he be criticized for not living up to a criterion that had not as yet been established? Until Noach's time, no one had displayed the moral and spiritual courage of swimming against the stream, of being isolated and alone in his belief. He was the first to defy public opinion, exposing himself to decades of derision, as described in the Midrash. No one until his day had done as much, let alone more. Can he then be criticized for failing to establish a still greater precedent, for failing to achieve a standard the world was not to see for another ten generations?

To appreciate the depth of our sages' comment, we must consider the generation in which Noach lived. Generations can be classified as "root generations" and "fruit generations." The distinction in judgment between fruit and roots is that the fruit of a tree is judged solely by the present - how firm and ripe the fruit is, how succulent its taste, how plentiful its juice. Roots, on the other hand, are judged not only by their hardness in the present, but by the quality of the fruit they eventually produce. So, too, with generations. Some come as the continuation of an era for which the roots were laid in the past, that are the possessors of a proud heritage of spiritual standards. They are "fruit generations," which are judged by their own acts and deeds. Other generations, however, are not heirs to so well-prepared a heritage. They are not descendants but ancestors, the ones who must show the way for others to emulate. The success in life of these "root generations" is judged not only by their own righteousness, but by the deeds of their successors as well.

It was this lack that *chazal* found in Noach. His was a "root generation," with no heritage from the past. His duty was not only to himself, but to the generations to follow. Yet, when Avraham's time came, he was forced to begin anew. The very knowledge of Hashem's existence was forgotten and had to be freshly discovered by Avraham. Thus, "in Avraham's generation, Noach was not considered at all"; his influence was in no way felt; he did not pass the test for a "root generation."

Our generation, too, is a root generation. Not only has the heritage of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov been weakened by the catastrophes of the recent past - the physical catastrophe of annihilation in the war and the spiritual catastrophe in the neglect of Torah and Yiddishkeit in America, with the ensuing assimilation and loss of true Jewish values. We also live in an era of new problems and new opportunities which our forebearers could not anticipate, an era which calls for construction rather than consolidation. Ours is the task not merely to care for ourselves, but to prepare the way for the generations to come.

Because the instruction was excellent and children read a year earlier than in public schools, when a student transferred from the yeshivah to the city system he was considerably ahead of his new classmates. Any doubts about the quality of the secular studies now disappeared.

In its second year R. Teitz said that the yeshivah would grow to a point where the annual budget might be \$25,000. Who could have predicted that it would reach an enrollment of more than nine hundred students and the budget would be \$25,000 for each school day?

When the second floor of the mikvah was no longer adequate for the yeshivah classes, R. Teitz asked the YMHA board for permission to rent their rooms and gymnasium. The answer was an immediate no.

He printed a brochure entitled "What Is Your Answer to the Problem?" On the first page he defined **OUR PROBLEM**:

While we are deeply concerned with the physical fate of the Jewish children in Europe who are being barbarously annihilated, we are absolutely indifferent to the spiritual future of the Jewish children in this community who are drifting away from our ranks as a result of neglect of their Jewish education. Alone, we are unable to fight the arch-enemy of Jewry, but it is within our power to overcome **Ignorance and indifference**, the arch-enemies of Judaism.

Fifty years before commissions studied the problem of the vanishing American Jew, he foresaw what would happen with our practice of **TOO LATE AND TOO LITTLE**, the title of the second part of the leaflet:

Let us first take cognizance of conditions prevailing in our City of Elizabeth.

Jewish spiritual life in our community is at its lowest ebb in history. Of the 1,400 children of school age, fewer than 300 receive any Jewish instruction. Of this small group, only a few

receive a fairly satisfactory education. The remainder suffer from that illness, characterized as being "too late and too little." Jewish education is begun at a late age and ends with the day of Bar Mitzvah.

Our youth does not possess the fundamentals of Jewish education, and is therefore ignorant and estranged from Jewish life. He does not feel deeply the pain and suffering Jewry is experiencing in these very dark hours of its history. He wanders unhappily in a world filled with animosity and hatred, and lacks the spiritual foundation to resist and defend himself.

R. Teitz believed in gathering accurate data to produce an accurate analysis, no matter how dire the situation. He conducted his own census revealing the dismaying finding that almost eighty percent of the Jewish children in town were being condemned to Jewish illiteracy. A measure of how removed young people were from any feeling of solidarity with fellow Jews is that people who are now in their seventies recall raising money to help the Finns in their battle against Russian occupation while being unaware of the war against the Jews.

Parents who bemoaned their children's lack of Jewish identification assumed there was no remedy:

The parents of our youth freely admit their lack of knowledge of things Jewish and their inability to instill the proper spirit in their children.

We are witnessing a transformation of great historic importance in American Jewish life. The older generation is disappearing from the American scene, and its place is being taken by the American born child. Unfortunately, very few of the younger generation are equipped with the necessary knowledge to fill the vacancies in our synagogues, and in our religious and national organizations. Synagogue attendance is dwindling to a vanishing point. As evidence of this situation, of a total of seven synagogues that functioned five years ago, three are closed, the others struggle for existence, and only two manage to maintain daily services.



There is therefore the grave danger that a missing link is severing the chain of Jewish progress in our community.

Those who are concerned with the future, must be alarmed with this deplorable condition, and must ask themselves, "What can be done to secure the future of Jewish life in our community?"

R. Teitz did not flinch at the truth. But he had a novel solution, which he entitled with a verse from the Song of Songs (1:6): **THEY MADE ME THE KEEPER OF THE VINEYARDS, BUT MY OWN VINEYARD I HAVE NOT KEPT.**

Analyzing the causes that brought about this condition, we are forced to acknowledge that the **guilt is ours**. The City of Elizabeth deemed it necessary to build many Synagogues and founded other institutions. It supported lavishly and with an open hand other Jewish institutions in America, Palestine and Europe. There is not a "vineyard" in Jewish life toward which we have not contributed our share, and very often more than our share. At the same time we have neglected our own "vineyard" and have overlooked the necessity of creating a spiritual home for our children. We have failed to establish a proper educational institution at which our youth could receive Jewish instruction, and develop as conscious Jews and proud Americans. As a community we have never considered Jewish education as a **community problem**.

Surveying the surrounding communities in New Jersey, such as Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Plainfield, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Camden, we find in each of these, in addition to Synagogues, 'Y's, Community Centers and other institutions, there has been erected a separate institution housing a Hebrew School. Every Synagogue and responsible Jewish organization in these communities shoulder the responsibility for the maintenance and development of these schools, realizing that the Talmud Torah is the **foundation and very life blood** upon which their organizations depend. On the other hand, Elizabeth is the **only** community in New Jersey—nay, in

the United States, which does not possess a building for such purpose. Lacking these facilities, Jewish education is impeded. Since the community as a whole did not find it necessary to provide for such an institution, the parents, as well as their children, regarded Jewish education as of minor importance.

R. Teitz recommended learning from the example of all the places he cited to make Jewish education a shared responsibility of the entire community rather than a choice for each Synagogue to fulfill or not, and a challenge for each parent to face alone. But in applying the lesson of Song of Songs 1:6, where the Jewish nation realizes it must take care of its own vineyard, he proposed a plan much larger than the central afternoon school each of these neighboring cities had created:

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

In order to remedy this condition, and to insure the future of Judaism in our community, we have devised an educational program which embraces every phase of Jewish education.

Our plan embodies the following basic principles:

1. Jewish education must commence **prior** to kindergarten age.
2. The standard of Jewish training must be elevated to such a degree as to be worthy of the name, **education**. Such instruction should embrace reading and writing, the Hebrew language; the study of the Bible, Jewish history, law and customs; to the end that our youth may acquire the knowledge of the heritage and culture of our people, and become acquainted with the vast treasures of wisdom and ethics based upon our Holy Torah and our Sages.
3. Bar Mitzvah must not be the cessation point of Jewish learning. As long as our youth is of school age, a portion of his time should be devoted to Jewish studies.
4. Our **daughters** should receive the same education as our sons.
5. Ample opportunity to acquire Hebrew learning should be afforded those **adults** who have once learned, and since forgot-



ten, and those who have never learned, so that this lost generation may be redeemed.

The bold letters said it all: begin Torah education early; make it high-level; provide it for every Jewish child, girl and boy; maintain it through adolescence; invite adults to share in their heritage.

Under the heading **OUR PLAN** the first two points are:

1. To establish a kindergarten in which 4 year old children may assemble three hours daily, in a Jewish atmosphere and environment, and become acquainted with daily Jewish life, songs and prayers.
2. To establish a Yeshivah in which older children may receive a secular education as well as Jewish instruction, taught to them by competent and licensed teachers, in a manner comparable with and parallel to the curriculum as established by the local Board of Education.

Our present limited facilities have been taxed to capacity. Without solicitation, we have a waiting list of 45 children. With the proper facilities, this number will be multiplied many times.

OUR PROBLEM led to OUR PLAN; now he moved to OUR CAMPAIGN:

A central educational institution must be erected. For this purpose there has been organized a representative committee of responsible citizens, from every walk of life, who are vitally concerned with, and interested in Americanism and Judaism, for the purpose of launching a campaign to raise \$100,000 for the erection of a modern and adequate building. . . . The structure will be located in the Elmora section of the City of Elizabeth, now acknowledged to be the very center of Elizabeth Jewry, so that it may accomplish the **greatest good for the greatest number.**

A lawyer, Nathan Kalish, and respected businessmen were the officers. A "Suburban Committee" included Louis Winetsky from Linden, while the forty-eight members of the Elizabeth Committee were people of significance in the city: three Feldman brothers and two of their brothers-in-law; a father and son, Nathan Wolgin and Dr. Philip Wolgin; Captain Milton Levy, an officer in the army from the beginning of the war; a dentist, Dr. Rudolph Sussman; four more doctors; a judge; and many businessmen.

In May 1944 the Yavneh Yeshivah bought 326-336 Elmora Avenue, the Maverick Estate, named for a family whose records go back to Samuel Maverick, coming from England in the 1660s. The spacious mansion on this corner property was transformed into a school while the backyard that ran a half block along Livingston Road allowed plenty of room for the children to play.

An unusual interview took place in the midst of the renovations. Hinda Tartaz had met the Aboffs at a summer camp where they were all on staff. She had a teaching job lined up at a New York public school for September but Sam and Ruth persuaded her to travel to Elizabeth on a day off to see the new yeshivah. Her journey from Brooklyn included a subway trip, a ride on a ferry, a Jersey Central train to the stop on Elmora Avenue, then a two-block walk to a white wooden mansion. The school office was the former kitchen, filled with carpenters and school personnel preparing for the new year. R. Teitz interviewed her in a classroom.

He asked about her education and teaching experience; in the course of answering she said that she had a job in a public school but had come at the Aboffs' insistence. He asked for the names of her parents and grandparents. She was surprised but guessed that the head of a yeshivah had to know the background of the teachers. When she talked about her family, she mentioned that her mother's uncle was R. Shmuel Fondlier, a relative she had never met but whom she revered, based on her mother's description.

R. Teitz said, "I knew there was something special! I recognized something as soon as you walked in!" Her great-uncle had taught ethics at Slobodka, where R. Teitz and his younger brother both

– when the woman would certainly have stopped singing. “In actuality,” said R’ Kulitz, “R’ Isser-Zalman was concerned that when he would walk into the house, the woman, who enjoyed singing while on the job, would be inconvenienced by having to stop singing for the rest of her working time.” Also cf. the definitive biography of R’ Isser-Zalman Meltzer, *ברוך עץ החיים*^l, where that *tzaddiq*’s grandson records the story as it occurred – and that his grandfather himself explained his action without any reference to *קול באשה*; it even has R’ Isser-Zalman pacing *on the porch* just outside the door to his house – where he could likely still hear the singing (if he would choose to listen)^m! R’ Yitzhaq Kulitz was

^l תשמ"ו, חסמ"ו – p. 272: this work was mentioned above, in fn. u on p. xviii. ^m Cf. *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, by Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff (KTAV Publishing House, New York, 1999), Vol. I, pp. 178-179, for a similar story regarding R’ Yosheh-Ber of Brisk, related by R’ Levi-Yitzhaq Horowitz. The average male reader would not have the power of concentration needed to stand by while a woman is singing and yet not listen. This author came across another such instance in an interview R’ Yaakov-Yitzchok Ruderman gave to some Torah educators, graduates of Yeshivath Rabbenu Yisrael Meir Hakohen. He noted the special stress Slabodka Yeshiva put on interpersonal relations and told the following story – it was apparent in his tone that he was unsure whether to tell the story to his interviewers, but he did: In the early 5690s (1930s), he was invited to spend a *Shabbath* at the home of the Rav of Elizabeth, New Jersey, R’ El’azar-Meir Preil. Before the arrival of the Sabbath, the *rav* took him aside for a confidential exchange of words. He told his guest that he had several daughters eating at the Sabbath table who enjoyed *Shabbos* by singing the *zemiroth* along with him. (At this point in the narrative, R’ Ruderman interjected that there were no Bais Yaakov schools in America at the time – indicating that Bais Yaakov graduates would know better than to do this.) The *rav* told him that R’ Baruch-Ber Leibowitz had been a guest at his home in 5689 (1929), and when the girls began singing, he stood up and ran out of the room – unintentionally perturbing the *Shabbath* for the girls and humiliating their father. The host then asked whether R’ Ruderman would do the same. The guest replied that with his Slabodka background, he would not destroy the family’s Sabbath spirit or embarrass his host; he would remain sitting and not listen to the girls – despite the seeming normative halakhic imperative to leave the room. “My *frumkeit* does not have to hurt others,” he concluded. Also see fn. w beginning on p. xlili, and cf. fn. m on p. 172, and fn. w on p. 650, below.

upset about the *rosh* Zalman’s motive because missed out on that *tzaddiq*. In this case, one man’s other’s significantly. It be of negligible importance to reader, too, may have the author’s, but I feel that, a misguided Torah scholar proposing extrapolations as anyone else’s. I have an understanding of the matter considered my interpretation, I sprinkle of such verbs as “suggest”

In his introduction “My thought has always been that my mind should be spoken; and not every claim that he abides by an aphorism is also listed. I have found an example in the *אגרות אבות*, the son of the *rav* his father by quoting the name of R’ Reuven. The *rav* guided by this principle about (his) father’s father’s mouth, all

את חיי, נני יארו, תשמ"ד " *אגרות אבות*, ירושלים, תשמ"ב) example of how R’ Yisroel p. 2

programs had to be devised to execute the typesetting to this author's satisfaction. My hearty appreciation goes out to the person responsible for doing a difficult job so well; he toiled unremittingly to perfect the technical facet of this publication and turn it into something exceptional, almost a work of art. He is my colleague and friend R' Moshe Kaplan, son-in-law of a distinguished neighbor, the late R' Meir Kahane, הי"ד. R' Moshe's perseverance in issuing from his hand a דבר מתוקן (flawless object)⁴ made this book as unique in form as it is – I pray – in content. Another fine individual to whom I am grateful is R' Yoseph Mendelson, of Bayith Vagan, a multifaceted scholar who taught in various American universities and was a *talmid* of the *gaon* R' Hayyim Zimmerman in Jerusalem. He kindly meted out his advice unstintingly on various aspects of this book. The faults that the reader finds with the finished product likely resulted from those pieces of advice which I did not heed. A third individual who earned my gratitude by helping weed out mistakes in the earlier edition is R' Yitzhaq Ginsberg, of Monsey. (Among the mistakes to which this great *talmid hakham* called my attention is the word "*shai'ur*"; it has been corrected to *shi'ur*.)

ספר חסידים instructs: "Before you complete the writing of a *sepher* you should pray that no harm befall you as long as you are occupied with that *sepher*." I utter that prayer as this, the first of four envisioned volumes, reaches the public. It is a prayer that can be fulfilled only if the coming three volumes will take much less time to produce than this one. And I end with the prayer of David, our righteous king: אתה ה' לא תכלא רחמין ממני חסדך ואמתך חמיד יצרוני (Thou, O G-d, do not withhold Thy compassion from me; may Thy kindness and troth always safeguard me)⁵.

⁴ See תהלים "אור תהריב" פסחים ט. that this is the mark of a *talmid hakham*.
⁵ מ:יב "Apropos fn. *m* on p. *xxii*, it was brought to my attention that a granddaughter of said Elizabeth Rabbi, Dr. Rivkah Blau, in her *Learn Torah, Love Torah, Live Torah: Harav Mordechai Pinchas Teitz, the Quintessential Rabbi* (Ktav Publishing House, 2001), pp. 72-73, denies the accuracy of this story, and claims in the name

FOREWORD: IMPROVED EDITION

Six weeks after *Making of a Godol* saw the light and its distribution began, rumblings started within some narrow circles of the *yeshiva* community in Israel and, then, in America. They were initiated by a grandson of a *godol* – my father’s bosom-friend, R’ Aaron Kotler, *zatzal* – who did not approve of revealing certain events in the youth of his forbear. Besides philosophizing on pp. xxiv-xxx, above, about seeming blemishes of great Torah leaders – that they are not really faults – I tried to forewarn the reaction of “descendants of (the) greats of yore” by appealing to their intelligence. Judging other *gedolim* by the one *godol* I knew intimately, my father, *zatzal*, I assumed that those who are *not* intelligent will not find an ear among influential persons. But I was wrong, and the book (nicknamed degradingly, “*buch*”) was banned by some great Torah leaders – who, not knowing English, did not read the book, and relied on distorted reports. The reader can read all about this *issur* in *Anatomy of a Ban* (Private Printing Publishers, 2003), presently unavailable to the public at large, which will, hopefully, some-

of her mother and aunt. Basya and Hannah, respectively, said daughters of the Rav, that when the girls began singing, a student accompanying R’ Baruch-Ber spoke up to his *rebbe* and asked why he was *not* leaving the room, and he replied, “When prayers are being recited, there is no problem with קהל באשה; they’re praying with a melody.” (On March 30, 2003, a nephew of Basya reported that he had heard from her that the girls were singing *Birkhath haMazon*, not *zemiroth* – and from R’ Aaron Paperman, that their father had composed the tune they were using at the time he had studied in Telz under R’ Laizer Gordon, and, later, R’ Yosheh-Laib Bloch adopted it for the *yeshiva* [see pp. 995 and 1009], and it is still in use in the present-day Telz Yeshiva in Cleveland.) On August 6, 2003, R’ El’azar-Meir Teitz, brother of Dr. Blau, reported that R’ Baruch-Ber’s “accompanying student” was his son-in-law R’ Ruven Grozovsky, and his exact reply was, “They are only praising [*loben*] the [One] Above with a melody.” R’ Shmuel Landesman, a great-grandson of R’ Preil through Hannah, wrote me on November 1, 2002, that he heard another version of this story from his grandmother “many times”, to wit, R’ Ruven stood up to leave the room, and R’ Baruch-Ber told him to return to his seat, and not listen.

day (probably not in my *ing of a Godol* editions.

In *Anatomy of a Ban*, that it was open to misr conveyed to the *gedolim* the dangers to, *klal Yis*. And although, I posit, r who either do not know are part of the reading their consumption, also. in a way that no unpreju dation of *gedolim*, which Of course, anyone readi have seen clearly that r such that I felt that by t only be raised! (Some p properly, skip its introdu understanding any non-f signatories on the ban, a doxical description of m *shiva* who had objected author meant *l’shem Sha* lial love for the *gedolim* the straight line]’ leading giants of Jewry. [His] obj or minute element unrecc and motivate, so that man In justification of his sign a global image of *gedoli* about their beliefs, dedica gry people, and surely not accusation that the *gedol* cipled?) or “angry” (per

צפנת פענח

כללי התורה והמצוות

מאת רבן של כל ישראל

מרן ר' יוסף בהרב ר' אפרים פישל ראזין

זצוקלה"ה

חלק שלישי

בעריכת

מרדכי פנחס טייץ

אב"ד זר"מ עליזאבעט נ. דזש.

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הוצאת מכון צפנת פענח

ע"י הישיבה דעליזאבעט

שנת חמשת אלפים שבע מאות ארבעים ושש לבריאה

