

The *Mishnah* (*Sanhedrin* 10:3, 107b) teaches that the *Dor Ha'mabul* / Generation of the Flood has no share in *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come. On the verse (*Bereishit* 7:10), "It came to pass after the seven-day period that the waters of the Flood were upon the earth," the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 108b) asks: "What was the nature of this seven-day period?" The *Gemara* answers that during that seven-day period, *Hashem* gave the people of that generation a taste of *Olam Ha'ba* so that they would know what they would be missing. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: How wonderful it must have been to experience a taste of *Olam Ha'ba*, about which the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 34b) says, "All of the prophets prophesied only about the Days of *Mashiach*, but *Olam Ha'ba*--no eye has seen it but Yours (G-d's)." Obviously, continues R' Charlap, *Hashem* did not give that generation a taste of *Olam Ha'ba* out of spite. Rather, the *Gemara* means that the people of that generation were so entrenched in their evil and corrupt ways that the only remaining hope for awakening them to repent was by giving them a taste of *Olam Ha'ba*. Of course, when that did not work, the fact that even a taste of *Olam Ha'ba* could not motivate them to repent became another strike against them--and a very serious one at that.

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Shabbat

R' Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub z"l (1932-2010; Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: R' Eliyahu z"l (1720-1797; the *Vilna Gaon*) cites sources from our Sages teaching that our prayers on *Shabbat* can be accepted in Heaven as readily as those of the Ten Days of Repentance--for example, an individual's prayers can be accepted without needing the supporting merit of the *Tzibbur* / congregation. The reason for this is that on *Shabbat*, all of Creation is elevated until it is, so-to-speak, in *Hashem's* Presence. Thus, we can speak to Him directly without interference from the prosecuting angel.

R' Weintraub adds: This assumes, of course, that the prayers we pray on *Shabbat* are "prayers of *Shabbat*"--i.e., that the one praying is living in a *Shabbat* atmosphere, aware that he is in the presence of the King.

(*Raza D'shabta* p.252)

R' Ze'ev Mendelevsky *shlita* (Yerushalayim) elaborates: It would appear that the possibility of living in a *Shabbat* atmosphere and thereby elevating one's prayers is dependent on first studying the meanings of prayers and their words.

In general, R' Mendelevsky continues, one must prepare for *Shabbat* in order to be elevated by it. This preparation can be done in two ways: One way is to study books and essays that speak of the loftiness of *Shabbat*. The second way is to study the meanings of the prayers, for the Sages who wrote them imbued in their words the ability to elevate a person. The latter approach is preferable, R' Mendelevsky writes, for it enables a person to easily review and reinforce what he learned week-after-week, even if he (so far) understands only a small part of the prayers.

(*Shabbat Kodesh Yakar Mi'paz* p.10)

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"Noach walked with Elokim." (6:9)

Rashi z"l writes: In the case of Avraham, the Torah says (*Bereishit* 24:40), "*Elokim* before whom I walked." Noach needed G-d's support to strengthen him in his righteousness, whereas Avraham drew his moral strength from within himself and walked in righteousness by his own effort. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Yehuda Ashlag z"l (1885-1954; Poland and Eretz Yisrael) elaborates: Our Sages speak of "*Ahavah ha'teluyah b'davar* / love that is dependent on something" and "*Ahavah she'ainah teluyah b'davar* / love that is not dependent on something." Love for *Hashem* that is motivated by goodness that one has received from *Hashem*--even though it causes a person to love *Hashem* with all his heart and soul--is still "love that is dependent on something," which is an inferior type of love. Such was the nature of Noach's love for *Hashem*; he "walked with *Elokim*," i.e., he needed the support of G-d's gifts to him to strengthen his love for *Hashem*.

Avraham, in contrast, loved *Hashem* completely, without qualification and without needing support. Even if *Hashem* would have given Avraham nothing, Avraham would have loved *Hashem*--he would have walked alone "before" *Elokim*--with "love that was not dependent on something." (Perhaps the *Akeidah*, when Avraham believed that he was commanded to kill Yitzchak, was meant to put this type of love to the ultimate test.)

(*Peirush Ha'sulam: Hakdamat Ha'Zohar* #198)



"Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma, and Hashem said to Himself, 'I will no longer curse the ground because of man... nor will I again continue to strike every living being, as I have done'." (8:21)

The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 65a) comments on this verse: "Whoever is appeased after drinking wine is thinking like his Creator." R' Avigdor Miller z"l (1908-2001; rabbi, *Mashgiach Ruchani*, and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Brooklyn, N.Y.) explains: Something small--the pleasing smell of Noach's *Korban* / sacrificial offering--was enough to cause *Hashem* to make the promises contained in our verse. A person who is likewise appeased through a small gift--for example, a cup of wine--is emulating G-d.

R' Miller continues: This teaches us that a person should never pass up the smallest opportunity to perfect himself. Some might argue that it is not fitting to forgive another person when one's mental clarity is tainted by wine. Rather, such decisions should be arrived at intellectually or through a conscious exercise of free will, they say. No! says the *Gemara*. A person who allows himself to let go of annoyance or irritation because of something as fleeting as the pleasant aroma of a *Korban* or a small cup of wine is thinking the way that *Hashem* thinks. (*Lev Avigdor* p.4)

"These are the offspring of Noach--Noach was a righteous man, perfect B'dorotav / in his generations; Noach walked with Elokim." (6:9)

Rashi z"l comments: Some of our Sages explain the word "*B'dorotav*" to Noach's credit--he was righteous even in his wicked generation, and had he lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous due to their good example. Others, however, explain "*B'dorotav*" as an expression of disgrace--in comparison with his own generation, Noach was righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Avraham, he would have been counted as nothing.

Rashi continues, commenting on the phrase, "Noach walked with *Elokim*": In the case of Avraham, the Torah says (*Bereishit* 24:40), "*Elokim* before whom I walked." [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Shlomo Luria z"l (1510-1573; Poland; known as "*Maharshal*") writes that these two comments of *Rashi* are meant to be read as one: Why did some Sages criticize Noach? Because he walked only with *Elokim*; he made no effort to bring his generation closer to G-d. In contrast, Avraham walked with people, i.e., he devoted all of his efforts to bringing them "under the wings of the *Shechinah*," so-to-speak. (*Yeriot Shlomo*)

R' Avraham Rivlin *shlita* (former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, Israel) adds: For a similar reason, the *Zohar* compares Noach unfavorably to Moshe Rabbeinu. The *Zohar* teaches: When *Hashem* said (*Shmot* 32:10, after *Bnei Yisrael* made the Golden Calf), "And now, let Me be. Let My anger flare up against them, and I shall annihilate them," Moshe immediately intervened on *Bnei Yisrael's* behalf. In contrast, Noach did nothing to try to save his generation, which is why the prophet (*Yeshayah* 54:9--in this week's *Haftarah*) refers to the flood as "the waters of Noach." [Until here from the *Zohar*]

R' Rivlin concludes: The Sages' disagreement about Noach's stature that is cited in *Rashi* appears in both the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 108a) and *Midrash Rabbah*. However, the harsh words that *Rashi* uses ("disgrace", "would have been counted as nothing") do not appear in those sources. Why, then, does *Rashi* speak of Noach using such terms? The *Zohar* quoted above, as well as *Maharshal's* comment, suggest an answer to that question: The greater a person is, the more he deserves harsh criticism if he fails to be a positive influence on his generation (see also *Shabbat* 55a).

(*M'invei Ha'kerem: Bereishit* p.77)

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R' Charlap concludes: This knowledge should frighten us if we do not prepare ourselves properly for a holy day. (Specifically, R' Charlap is referring to the *Seder* night.) The opportunity to be inspired by a holy day is limitless, but so is the culpability of a person who fails to take advantage of that opportunity. (*Mei Marom: Sichot L'Shalosh Regalim* p.6)