

פרשת נח

נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו [ו,ט]

יש דורשין לשבח, brings a מחלוקת regarding the word בדורותיו, in his generation. Some explain it as a praise. Even in his generation he was a צדיק, all the more so had he been in a more righteous generation. However, יש דורשין לגנאי, some explain it disparagingly, had he been in the generation of Avraham he wouldn't have been considered a צדיק. This seems strange. The Torah refers to נח as a צדיק, why should we try to belittle and criticize him?

on the פסוק, רש"י notes that נח needed extra דשמיא in his סיעתא דשמיא. אברהם on the other hand was able to serve Hashem on his own. From here it is clear that נח was not as great as אברהם אבינו. The dispute is why wasn't נח able to reach that level and be as great. Those who are דורשין לשבח say that although he was a צדיק, the רשעים were משפיע, they had somewhat of an effect on נח. Were he to be in a better environment, he would have been much greater. But those who are דורשין לגנאי say that נח was not influenced by the surrounding environment. He was able to protect himself from the various bad elements. The only explanation why נח was not greater must be because this was the מדריגה he had reached. Therefore, we can assume that he would be on this same level even if he were to live in a different generation. This is the גנאי, the criticism, the Torah placed against נח. There was still room for improvement to grow more and become greater.

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz (נ"ס' דעת תורה זצ"ל), points out that we see from here how much the Torah demands of us. A person may think that I am greater than others around me, whether it is in all areas or regarding certain מצוות, and I don't need to grow any further. But in the eyes of Hashem, this is not sufficient. נח was the greatest צדיק in his time, and yet we find that he is mentioned לגנאי, with criticism, for not meeting up to the standards of אברהם אבינו. We must constantly push ourselves to do more, so we can reach new heights in our עבודת ה'.

Have a good Shabbos.

Rabbi Yitzchok Davis

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