



Midrash - Parashat Noach

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

How should we understand this teaching from Yeshua? When he speaks of righteousness, how should we understand this? Should we understand righteousness in terms of the Hebrew Scriptures by which he taught from? Or should we redefine the term through a narrow reading of Paul's epistles?

Our parashah begins in Hebrew with the phrase:

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ--נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק

These are the offspring of Noach: Noach was a righteous man.

- I. Because of its unusual form, the midrash seeks to understand this introduction. It begins by citing three proverbs and using this passage as the base for comparison to understand this description of Noach. Of the generation of the flood, only Noach was blessed to have his offspring (his "house") remain as the foundation of the world. (1:1)
 - A. When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever. (Proverbs 10:25)
 - B. The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the **house** of the righteous will stand. (Proverbs 12:7)
 - C. The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. (Proverbs 14:11)
- II. Midrash continues on righteousness:
 - A. The midrash teaches that the righteousness of one individual overcomes and nullifies an entire generation of wickedness. (30:3)
 - B. What was Noach's toledot (fruit, offspring, legacy)? Righteousness. (30:4)
 - C. What was Noach's toledot (fruit, offspring, legacy)? Noach. (30:5)

- D. What is the toledot of the righteous? Life, religious actions & good deeds (30:6)
 - E. Peter says that Noach was a “herald (or “preacher”) of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). Where does he get this notion? (30:7-8)
 - F. How righteous was Noach? (30:9-10) Ezekiel 14:12-20; Matthew 5:17-20
 - G. Is testing for the righteous, or the wicked? (32:3)
 - H. The world is spared because of the righteous. (33:1)
 - I. In order for Noach to be declared righteous and the rest of the world condemned as wicked, there had to be a standard by which they were judged. The basis for the “Noachide” laws are found in Gen. 9. The midrash mentions these as a matter of fact. (33:8)
 - J. The midrash distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked, saying that the wicked are controlled by their hearts, whereas the righteous wield control over their hearts. (34:10)
 - K. Why does the midrash make such a big deal of the righteousness of Noach?
- III. The appearance of the rainbow is a sign of a wicked generation. (35:2)
- IV. Legends of Abraham, humanity’s next great hope. (38:13)