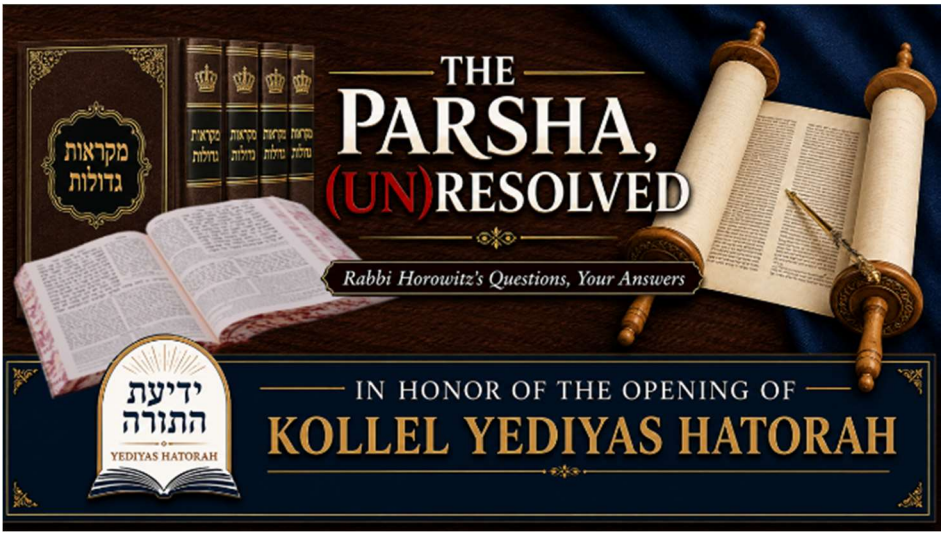


Parshas Noach

שנת תשפ"ז

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Zecher Tzaddik Livrachah — Why Here?

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Zecher Tzaddik Livrachah — Why Here?

בראשית ו:ט אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֶּךְ נֹחַ.

"These are the generations of Noach. Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with Hashem."

Rashi explains:

הואיל והזכירו, סיפר בשבחו, שנאמר זכר צדיק לברכה.

"Since the Torah mentioned him, it spoke in his praise, as it says: "The memory of a tzaddik is a blessing.""

The Torah does not praise every tzaddik each time his name is mentioned. Rather, it teaches this principle once, just as it teaches us the importance of refined speech without repeating the lesson in every case (see Bereshis 7:8 with Pesachim 3a).

But if this praise is connected simply to mentioning Noach's name, why did the Torah not teach us this principle the first time he is mentioned, at the end of Parshas Bereishis (5:29)?

וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה יְנַחֲמֵנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמֵעִצְּבוֹן יָדֵינוּ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אֵרְרָהּ ה׳.

"And he called his name Noach, saying: This one will comfort us from our work and the toil of our hands, from the ground which Hashem has cursed."

The Kli Yakar asks this question and therefore explains the pasuk differently. We are looking for an answer according to Rashi.

THE QUESTION **Why does the Torah teach us zecher tzaddik livrachah here, rather than when Noach is first mentioned at the end of Parshas Bereishis?**

Consider the question and send your approach before next week's issue.

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION & ANSWERS

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Parshas Bereishis 5787

Lemech's Kal Vachomer

בראשית ד:כג וַיֹּאמֶר לֶמֶךְ לְנָשָׁיו עָדָה וְצִלָּה שְׁמַעַן קוֹלִי נְשֵׁי לֶמֶךְ הַאֲזֵנָּה אִמְרָתִי כִּי אִישׁ הָרַגְתִּי לְפִצְעִי וְיֶלֶד לְחַבֻּרָתִי.

"Lemech said to his wives, Adah and Tzillah: Hear my voice, wives of Lemech; listen to my words. Have I killed a man by wounding him, or a child by bruising him?"

In his second explanation, Rashi quotes Bereishis Rabbah:

ומדרש בראשית רבה, לא הרג למך כלום, ונשיו פורשות ממנו משקיימו פריה ורביה, לפי שנגזרה גזרה לכלות זרעו של קין לאחר שבעה דורות, אמרו מה אנו יולדות לבהלה, למחר המבול בא ושוטף את הכל. והוא אומר להן וכי איש הרגתי לפצעי, וכי אני הרגתי את הבל, שהיה איש בקומה וילד בשנים, שיהא זרעי כלה באותו עון, ומה קין שהרג נתלה לו שבעה דורות, אני שלא הרגתי לא כל שכן שיתלו לי שביעיות הרבה! וזה קל וחומר של שטות, אם כן אין הקדוש ברוך הוא גובה את חובו ומקיים את דברו.

"According to the Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah, Lemech did not kill anyone. His wives separated from him after they had fulfilled the mitzvah of having children, because a decree had been issued that Kayin's descendants would be wiped out after seven generations. They said: Why should we bear children for nothing? Tomorrow the Flood will come and wash everything away. Lemech responded: Did I kill a man, causing myself a wound? Did I kill Hevel, who was a man in stature but a child in years, that my descendants should perish for that sin? If Kayin, who did kill, was granted a delay of seven generations, surely I, who did not kill, should be granted many times seven generations! This is a foolish kal vachomer. If so, Hashem would not collect His debt and fulfill His word."

However, were it not for the words of the Midrash, Lemech's argument would seem to be very sound.

There is, of course, the pasuk in Shemos (34:7).

פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וְעַל בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל שִׁלֵּשִׁים וְעַל רִבֵּעִים.

"He visits the sins of fathers upon children and upon children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

This pasuk appears connected to our case. It could be understood to mean that Hashem visits the sin on the fourth generation in addition to the third — seven generations in total — as we find here:

שִׁבְעָתַיִם יֻקָּם.

"Vengeance shall be exacted sevenfold."

In other words, the punishment would come after seven generations.

But see the Gemara in Sanhedrin 27b:

איש בחטאו יומתו ... ובנים בעון אבות לא? והכתיב פוקד עון אבות על בנים? התם כשאוחזין מעשה אבותיהן בידיהן.

"Each person shall be put to death for his own sin ... But are children not punished for their fathers' sins? Does the Torah not say that He visits the sins of fathers upon children? That is when they follow in their fathers' ways."

Rashi himself explains the pasuk in Shemos similarly:

פוקד עון אבות על בנים. כשאוחזים מעשה אבותיהם בידיהם, שכבר פירש במקרא אחר לשונאי.

"He visits the sins of fathers upon children — when they follow their fathers' ways, as the Torah already specifies elsewhere: "To those who hate Me.""

Accordingly, in our case, where Lemech had not killed anyone according to the Midrash, how could the punishment decreed upon Kayin possibly apply to him? This is precisely the kal vachomer Lemech made, and it appears that the Torah itself supports the underlying principle: "Each person shall be put to death for his own sin."

THE QUESTION **Why does the Midrash call Lemech's kal vachomer foolish, when Hashem Himself seems to agree with the basic principle behind his argument?**

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1. R' Yonasan Apfel (Beit Shemesh) pointed me to two meforshim who discuss this issue.

The first is the **Yefeh Toar** on the Midrash. He writes that the rule that children are not punished for the sins of their fathers applies specifically to grown children; young children can be punished. Certainly, this would apply to children who had not yet been born when the sin was committed, since they are considered part of their father himself. This is similar to how the entire world was punished for the sin of Adam Harishon.

However, this answer does not fully satisfy me. The Gemara itself asks from the pasuk:

פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וְעַל בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל שִׁלֵּשִׁים וְעַל רִבֵּעִים.

"He visits the sins of fathers upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

According to the Yefeh Toar, why did the Gemara not simply answer that this pasuk is speaking of children who were minors at the time of the sin, or who had not yet been born, whereas the rule that children are not punished for their fathers' sins applies only to grown children?

2. The second is Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, in his sefer **Ta'ama D'Kra**, who writes:

דזה כללות אבל בגזירה פרטית הוא בכל גוונא.

His intention seems to be that the rule that children are not punished for their fathers' sins is a general principle in the laws of punishment. However, in a particular case there can be a special decree that the father's punishment should include the death of his children, even if they themselves did not sin.

R' Moshe Dovid Weissman (Beitar Illit) suggested a similar approach, bringing support from **Tosafos**, Kerisos 7a (s.v. דחנקתיה). Tosafos indicates that according to the opinion that Kares includes the death of one's children, this applies even if the children have committed no sin at all.

I still find this somewhat difficult. Until now, I had understood that the rule that children are not punished for their fathers' sins is not merely an unexplained gezeiras hakasuv, but a fundamental principle of Hashem's justice in reward and punishment: each person is judged according to his own actions, and no one can be punished for a sin he did not commit.

As the pasuk in Yechezkel (18:20) states:

הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחֹטֵאת הִיא תָּמוּת בֵּן לֹא יִשָּׂא בַּעֲוֹן הָאָב וְאָב לֹא יִשָּׂא בַּעֲוֹן הַבֵּן צִדְקַת הַצַּדִּיק עָלָיו תִּהְיֶה וְרִשְׁעַת הָרָשָׁע עָלָיו תִּהְיֶה.

"The soul that sins shall die. A son shall not bear the sin of his father, and a father shall not bear the sin of his son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

According to this explanation, however, this is not a principle inherent in the very nature of Divine justice, but merely a general rule established by the Torah in the laws of punishment. In most cases, children are not punished for their fathers' sins, but there are punishments in which even someone who committed no sin himself can be punished. This requires further explanation.

3. **R' Weissman** sent an additional answer. Even if Lemech was correct regarding the basic principle that children are not punished for their fathers' sins, this principle does not follow from his kal vachomer.

Lemech's entire kal vachomer is based on the leniency we find in Kayin's own punishment: he was not punished immediately. From this, Lemech sought to argue that if the sinner himself was not punished immediately, then certainly someone who did not sin should not be punished immediately.

In truth, however, the principle that one person is not punished for another's sins stands independently of this kal vachomer. Therefore, even where the kal vachomer does not apply — for example, when the sinner himself was punished immediately — the rule still applies.

This is a very nice explanation, but one point still requires clarification. Even if the rule of personal responsibility stands on its own, once we find

that Kayin was not punished immediately, why can Lemech not argue by kal vachomer that his descendants certainly should not be punished immediately? "What is the flaw in the kal vachomer?"

4. **R' Dovid Bleier** (Beitar Illit) suggested that when the Gemara says children can be punished for their fathers' sins when they follow in their fathers' ways," it does not mean that the children committed the very same aveirah. Rather, it depends on whether the child is a tzaddik or a rasha. A tzaddik is not punished for his father's sins, whereas a rasha may also be punished for the sins of his ancestors.

We find that Lemech was himself a rasha, as Rashi writes earlier:

> ויקח לו למך שתי נשים. כך היה דרכן של דור המבול, אחת לפריה ורביה ואחת לתשמיש וכו'.

"Lemech took two wives. Such was the practice of the generation of the Flood: one for bearing children and one for marital relations, etc."

Accordingly, since Lemech himself was a rasha, it could be that he was subject to punishment for Kayin's sin as well, even though he had not himself committed the aveirah of murder.

How it Works

Each week follows a simple, two-part structure:

The Question: We present a sharp, unresolved kasha on the Parsha for you to discuss over Shabbos.

The Answers: A week later, we will present and critique listener-submitted answers following the presentation of the next week's question.

The conversation doesn't stop there—responses can continue to be discussed, and select insights will eventually be compiled and published in **a dedicated sefer**.

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