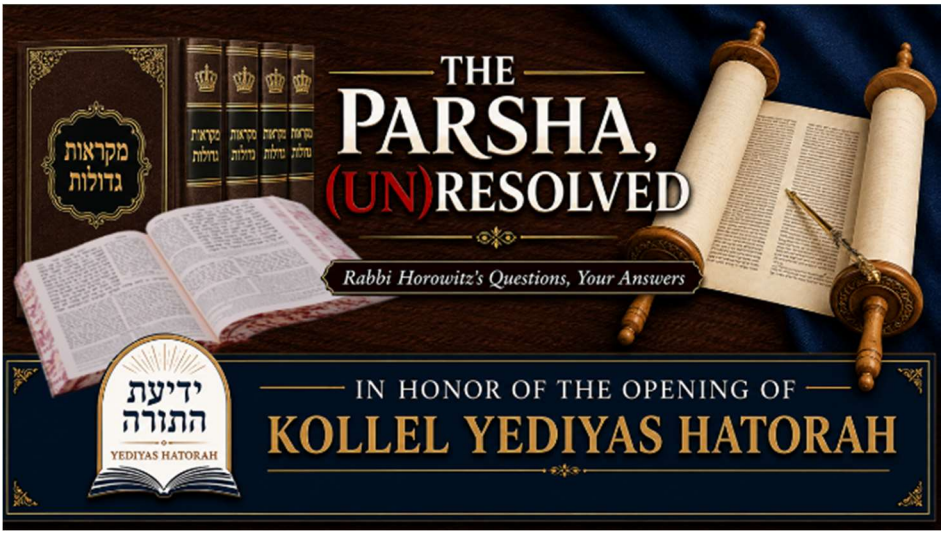


Parshas Lech Lecha

שנת תשפ"ז

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Who Is the Angel Named "Lailah"?

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Who Is the Angel Named "Lailah"?

יד:טו וַיֶּחָלֵק עֲלֵיהֶם לַיְלָה הוּא וַעֲבָדָיו וַיַּכֵּם וַיִּרְדְּפֵם עַד־חוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר מִשְּׂמֹאל לְדַמָּשֶׂק׃

"He divided his forces against them at night, he and his servants, and struck them, pursuing them as far as Chovah, which is to the left of Damascus."

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 96a) states,

"אמר רבי יוחנן אותו מלאך שנזדמן לו לאברהם לילה שמו שנאמר והלילה אמר הורה גבר."

R' Yochanan said: The angel who appeared to Avraham was named Lailah (Night), as the pasuk states, "And the night said: A man has been conceived."

I don't delve into the hidden realms of Torah to the extent that I am familiar with all the angels. But this particular angel I actually already know from the revealed parts of Torah. The Gemara (Niddah 16b) states,

"הלילה אמר הורה גבר... אותו מלאך הממונה על ההריון לילה שמו, ונוטל טפה ומעמידה לפני הקב"ה ואומר לפניו רבש"ע טפה זו מה תהא עליה גבור או חלש חכם או טיפש עשיר או עני."

"And the night said: A man has been conceived" ... The angel appointed over pregnancy is named Lailah. He takes a drop and presents it before Hashem, asking: Master of the Universe, what will become of this drop? Will this person be strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor?

Presumably, this is the very same angel, rather than two different angels who happen to share the same name. After all, R' Yochanan's source for identifying "Lailah" in Avraham's battle as the name of an angel is the very same pasuk from which the Gemara in Niddah derives the identity of the angel appointed over pregnancy.

Now, as a general rule, one angel does not perform two missions, as Rashi writes in Bereishis 18:2. It would seem, therefore, that everything an angel does must be connected to his particular mission. After all, Hashem

certainly has no shortage of angels! He has more than enough angels to carry out whatever tasks require an angel. How, then, can this angel named Lailah be responsible both for overseeing the determination of a person's characteristics before birth and for assisting Avraham in his battle against the four kings? Seemingly, these two responsibilities have nothing whatsoever to do with one another!

We can add another dimension to our question. We can understand why an angel named "Lailah" would be appointed over pregnancy, since conception is associated with nighttime, as the Gemara there states that marital relations are prohibited during the day. But warfare is not something particularly associated with nighttime. On the contrary, battles are generally fought during the day! What connection, then, does warfare have to the mission of an angel named "Lailah"?

THE QUESTION: What is the connection between the angel Lailah's role in overseeing the determination of a person's characteristics before birth and his mission to assist Avraham in the battle against the four kings?

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

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION & ANSWERS

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

Parshas Noach 5787

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?**

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

Answers to Last Week's Question

1. Many pointed out that there is not much of a question from the pasuk I cited about Noach's birth, as at the time of his birth he had not yet done anything to earn the title of tzaddik.

I'm not sure this really refutes the question. The entire principle is that a tzaddik should be praised whenever his name is mentioned, regardless of where we are in the narrative. Since Noach ultimately became a tzaddik, why shouldn't the Torah praise him even when describing his birth?

However, some suggested additional reasons why that would not have been the appropriate place.

R' Reuven Kantrowitz (Beitar Illit) suggested that praising Noach in the account of his birth might mistakenly imply that a person is born a tzaddik or a rasha. It was therefore more appropriate to praise him elsewhere.

R' Yisroel Ashkenazi (Beitar Illit) explained that part of Noach's praise was that he was righteous "in his generations" (whether understood as praise or criticism, as Rashi explains). This description would not have been appropriate before the Torah had established the nature of those generations.

But we still have a question from the pasuk at the end of Parshas Bereishis,

ו:ח, "וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי ה'."

"And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem."

We cannot simply answer that the Torah praises Noach in the very next pasuk, because that pasuk opens a new subject, "These are the generations of Noach." If the praise belonged to the previous mention, it should seemingly have appeared before this new introduction.

I would suggest that the Torah could not have taught us this principle in the pasuk of "ונח מצא חן". Had it added a description of his righteousness we would have understood this as explaining *why* Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes, rather than as an application of Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha. Therefore, the Torah waited our passuk where we would have expected it to proceed directly to the birth of

Noach's children. Instead, it interrupts the narrative to tell us about his righteousness. This interruption calls for an explanation, allowing us to derive the principle of Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha. Accordingly, this really is the first appropriate place for the Torah to teach us this concept.

2. Along similar lines**, R' Shimon Verbov** (Beitar Illit) suggested that Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha applies specifically when a tzaddik's name is mentioned incidentally, rather than when he himself is the subject of discussion. The earlier pesukim discuss Noach directly, whereas our passul introduces his descendants, mentioning his name only in passing. This, then, is the appropriate place to teach the principle.

Admittedly, we observe Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha even when discussing the tzaddik himself. Indeed, the Gemara (Yoma 38b) derives the principle from pesukim concerning Avraham:

"וה' אמר המכסה אני מאברהם אשר אני עושה, וכתיב ואברהם היו יהיה לגוי גדול ועצום."

"And Hashem said: Shall I conceal from Avraham what I am about to do?" followed by, "And Avraham will surely become a great and mighty nation."

I would therefore explain his intention as follows: It is obvious that a tzaddik deserves praise when he himself is being discussed. The chiddush taught here is that the same applies even to an incidental mention of his name.

3. That same Gemara, which derives Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha from the pesukim concerning Avraham Avinu, also challenges my assumption that the Torah should praise a tzaddik at the first mention of his name. After all, Avraham had been mentioned many times before! Why, then, did the Torah choose these particular places to teach the principle?

R' Yaakov Posner (Beitar Illit) explained that, on the contrary, Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha cannot apply the first time a tzaddik is mentioned! The word "Zecher" implies recalling something already known. Only after we have learned that someone is a tzaddik can a subsequent mention of his name serve as a reminder of his righteousness.

Accordingly, our pasuk is actually the first place where this principle can apply. The Torah is effectively telling us: Remember that this is the tzaddik about whom we were already told that he found favor in the eyes of Hashem.

This may also explain the timing of the Gemara's derivation concerning Avraham Avinu. Only after we have witnessed his righteousness through bris milah and his hospitality to guests does a subsequent mention of his name become an opportunity to remind us of those good deeds.

D. A talmid chacham who wishes to remain anonymous suggested a very novel interpretation of this Rashi, based on the very first Rashi in Chumash Bereishis, which serves as a kind of introduction to the entire sefer:

"אמר רבי יצחק, לא היה צריך להתחיל את התורה אלא מהחדש הזה לכם, שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו ישראל. ומה טעם פתח בבראשית, משום כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים. שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל, ליסטים אתם, שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם, כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברצונו נתנה להם, וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו".

"R' Yitzchak said: The Torah should have begun with 'This month shall be for you,' which is the first mitzvah commanded to the Jewish people. Why, then, did it begin with Creation? Because 'He declared the power of His works to His people, to give them the inheritance of nations.' If the nations of the world accuse the Jewish people of being robbers for conquering the lands of the seven nations, the Jewish people can answer: The entire world belongs to Hashem. He created it and gave it to whomever He saw fit. By His will He gave it to them, and by His will He took it away and gave it to us."

We can ask a question on this Rashi. He explains why the Torah needed to begin with Creation, but not why it includes all the parshiyos between Creation and Kiddush HaChodesh.

Some explain that Rashi was never questioning the need to record the generations, the stories of the Avos, and the enslavement in Mitzrayim. These are all necessary to understand the mitzvos and why they were given specifically to Klal Yisrael rather than to the other nations. Rashi's question concerned only the account of Creation.

But if so, why do we need the entire story of Noach and the Mabul? Seemingly, it has no bearing on the distinction between Klal Yisrael and the other nations, since all of humanity descends from Noach!

And this is precisely what our Rashi comes to answer, since the Torah mentioned him, it spoke in his praise, as it says: Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha.

In other words, strictly speaking, the Torah could have sufficed with mentioning Noach's birth, continuing with the birth of his children, ," and then proceeding directly to Avraham Avinu. But having mentioned Noach, the Torah expanded upon his praise, recording the entire account of the Mabul and Noach's salvation in the merit of his righteousness.

According to this interpretation, Rashi's words are placed here quite deliberately, as an introduction to the entire story that follows, which was included solely because of the principle of Zecher Tzaddik L'Vracha!

THE PARSHA, (UN)RESOLVED

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