

“אלא תולדות נח נח איש צדיק תמים ה' בדרתיו...” בראשית ו:ט

“These are the “offspring” of Noach - Noach was a righteous person, he was perfect in his generation...” Bereishis 6:9

The first pasuk in this week's Parsha is peculiar. The pasuk begins to introduce the offspring of Noach and immediately sidetracks into a description of his fine character. Rashi in his first answer explains that the reason for this is, since the Torah mentioned the name of Noach it must tell of his praise, as we learn from the pasuk in Mishlei of “זכר צדיק לברכה” – “The remembrance of a righteous person shall be for blessing.” Interestingly enough, Rashi himself in Mishlei explains that this pasuk comes to teach us that when one mentions the name of a צדיק, he will come to *bless* the צדיק. The question then becomes, how is the continuation of our local pasuk a blessing for Noach? How is describing that Noach was a righteous man and perfect in his generation considered a blessing? The pasuk seems to be merely praising Noach for his spiritual accomplishments. Furthermore, Rashi at the end of our pasuk on the word “בדרתיו” explains that some authorities understand that Noach was a tremendous צדיק and had he lived in a generation of צדיקים he would have been only greater, whereas other authorities contend that Noach was not that big of a deal, only in comparison to his own terribly wicked generation was he considered righteous, but had he lived in the times of Avraham Avinu he would not have amounted to anything. According to the second opinion that Noach was not on the level of a true צדיק, why would Rashi explain that the pasuk is mentioning his praises because of “זכר צדיק לברכה” when Noach was really no great shakes at all?

We find that the Gemara in Yoma asks, where do we learn the concept of “זכר צדיק לברכה” from the Torah? The Gemara answers, that we see when Hashem mentions Avraham Avinu in Parshas Vayeira, He immediately gives Avraham the bracha of “...ואברהם היו יה' לגוי גדול...” – “Avraham is surely to become a great and mighty nation”. Rashi explains that since Hashem mentioned Avraham's name, He blessed him. It seems clear that Avraham was indeed *literally* blessed after he was mentioned. By the way, R' Akiva Eiger on the side of the Gemara over there says “נח עיין רש”י בחומש ריש פרשת ברכה” so to say, not a literal blessing, rather a mention of his praise?

The Vilna Gaon in his commentary on Mishlei explains that the word “זכר” in the pasuk of “זכר צדיק לברכה” refers to the מצות עשה ומעשים טובים – the positive commandments and good deeds of the צדיק, which are for the ברכה, meaning that the good deeds that the צדיק has performed in his lifetime are a blessing in and of themselves. Therefore the remembrance of a צדיק is eternally for ברכה as the legacy of the good deeds that he had performed lives on forever.

With this explanation perhaps we can answer for those authorities that are דורש לגנאי. Rashi says that לגנאי means that Noach would not have made mettle if he had lived in the generation of Avraham. Perhaps that is why by Avraham, when Hashem mentioned his name, He gave Avraham an outright blessing for it was clear that Avraham was a צדיק, whereas after Noach was mentioned it may still have been unclear if he was a true צדיק. Therefore, the Torah relates his praise, proving that he was a צדיק – “נח איש צדיק”, which in and of itself will bring down a ברכה for Noach on account of his מצות עשה and good deeds. This may be why Rashi in Parshas Noach brings the pasuk in Mishlei specifically and *not* the pasuk by Avraham Avinu because by Avraham, Hashem gave him a definitive blessing. By Noach where there is no standard blessing mentioned in the pasuk, Rashi learns from “זכר צדיק לברכה” which as the Gra explained means that the good deeds of the צדיק cause inherent ברכה for the צדיק, which is what the pasuk is doing by listing Noach's מעשים טובים which are for him a ברכה.

“זכר צדיק לברכה” and “שם רשעים ירקב” are facts of Life and the Afterlife. Our fulfillment of מצות עשה and performance of מעשים טובים will cause our remembrance to be eternally לברכה – for blessing.