Jewish Tribune – Noach

**Higher Vision**

Our parsha introduces Noach in flattering terms, calling him a tzaddik and “tamim b’dorosov”. Pretty impressive. The Torah itself testifying that Noach is righteous and perfect.

On the words, תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹֽרֹתָיו “he was perfect in his generations”, Rashi famously comments:

יש מרבותינו דורשים אותו לשבח – Some of our Sages interpret the word “בְּדֹֽרֹתָיו – in his generation”, favourably. Had Noach lived in a generation surrounded and supported by other righteous people, he would have accomplished even more and reached greater heights.

ויש שדורשים אותו לגנאי - Others interpret it as derogatory: Noach was only relatively accomplished. In comparison to his lowly generation, he was indeed righteous, but if he had been in the generation of Avrohom Avinu, Noach would not have been considered a significant contributor.

Of all the people on the planet, Hashem chose Noach to continue and sustain life through the Mabul, and to rebuild society after the storm passed, leading the world to move forward.

Yet, there is ongoing debate and analysis that cast aspersions on judging the tzaddik who was chosen by G-d to the rescuer and new progenitor of the human race.

Is it not presumptuous to judge him negatively? As Rabbi Judah Mischel writes in Baderech (p228): "Are we like a 'Monday morning armchair quarterback' when we compare Noach to tzaddikim of different generations and circumstances, and find him lacking?”

Rabbi Mischel cites Rebbe Chaim Hager, the Toras Chaim of Kosov, who makes a fascinating diyuk, a pointed insight, into Rashi's wording. There are two categories of people mentioned: יש מרבותינו דורשים אותו לשבח - there from among our teachers; those who are by, by definition, seeing the good and judging favourably.

And then on the other hand, ויש שדורשים אותו לגנאי, there are those who see who see what is lowly, what is lacking, and compare Noach negatively to other generations. Rashi only refers to the first kind of people as Rabboseinu - our teachers. The latter category, those who see what is lowly, cannot be considered "our teachers".

Rabbi Mischel then cites Rebbe Menachem Nochum Twersky of Chernobyl, one of the early students of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and his sefer, Me'or Einayim. If Noach's legacy and place in history are open to discussion, and if there is room to "interpret" Noach positively or negatively, why be doresh l'gnai at all! If we have the choice, why see an event, scenario or person as lacking or failing, if we are able to focus on the positive?

How we look at each other is our choice. In every situation in life, at home, and at work, with our loved ones and with strangers, and even with regard to ourselves, we have the opportunity to frame reality as "half full" rather than "half empty". To be doresh l'shevach, to view Hashem's creation through a lens of positivity, requires effort and a special focus of spiritual ophthalmology.

I had the privilege of spending Succos in Eretz Yisrael. The Shabbos the day the war broke out was surreal in the extreme. The joyous spirit of Yom Tov, singing and dancing hakafos was punctuated by snippets of information trickling in which sounded ominous.

I saw one boy - only a year or two older than the ones I have the privilege to teach at Hasmonean - who had just been called up to report to his army base and in his green army uniform get called up to the Torah for a Simchas Torah aliyah before he headed off to the unknown.

Yes, he may look different to many of the circles we swim in and his world view may not mirror ours, but surely there is more that unites than divides.

In the crazy scramble to get tickets to fly back to England, I overheard a precious conversation between a Chassidishe man from New York and a chiloni Israeli woman working at the checkout desk. After all passengers had been checked in and the flight closed, he went over to her and thanked her for all her efforts, performed in very stressful conditions. He said he would like to tip the four women who were dealing with the check in. He was clearly very grateful and wanted to express his thanks.

The secular Israeli lady thanked him but said, “Please give whatever you were going to give us to Tzahal (IDF)”. He looked at the lady and said: “I want you to know that I already made a significant donation to Tzahal this morning.”

A chiloni, secular Israeli, and a chassidishe man from New York. Two worlds but one family.

Let us try to see the positive in everything we see. Let us be doresh l'shevach, to view Hashem's creation through a lens of positivity. That is the way of Rabboseinu.

**Rabbi Golker is the** **Menahel of Hasmonean Boys School and Hasmonean Girls School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**