



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Noach / פרשת נח 5779

Protecting or Radiating Sanctity

This week's parsha is a story of sanctity and righteousness on the defensive. There is a single God-fearing person in the world and he needs to stand strong against the cultural tides of society. According to the midrash No'ach faced ridicule during the one hundred and twenty years that he spent building the teivah. While it is not explicit in the Torah, one can imagine that No'ach and his family faced tremendous pressure to conform to society and it might have been difficult for them to remain true to their values and sanctity.

What is the sole righteous family to do in a time of societal disrepair? Enter a Teivah - literally and figuratively. While No'ach had to enter the Teivah to save himself from the raging storm, perhaps this story teaches us a lesson that in certain time periods we need to isolate ourselves from the outside world. We need to build for ourselves a tightly sealed Teivah and retreat for a time until the storm subsides.

This seems to be the lesson taught by Rambam when he speaks of an evil city:¹

If they are wicked and sinful and do not allow him to reside there unless he mingle with them and follow their evil behavior, he should go out to caves, thickets, and deserts [rather than] follow the paths of sinners as [Yirmiyahu 9:1] states: "Who will give me a lodging place for wayfarers, in the desert.

At times, Jews must retreat from the world.

With this background, we can understand the revolution of a prophecy in our haftarah. Yeshayahu tells Yerushalayim of the future the following:²

Widen the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations, do not spare; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

¹ Rambam, hilchot De'ot 6:1. Translations are from Chabad.org.

² Yeshayahu 54:2.



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Noach / פרשת נח 5779

Yerushalayim will expand beyond its original borders in the messianic era. Similarly, Zecharya teaches us that Yerushalayim's walls will no longer demarcate the edge of the city:³

Jerusalem shall be inhabited like unwalled towns, because of the multitude of men and cattle therein.

People will live well beyond the walls of the city.

This openness and expansiveness of the future Yerushalayim stands in stark contrast to the Teivah of the parsha. Yerushalayim is the holiest spot on earth. In the model of the Teivah, the sanctified entity must be self-enclosed, isolated and walled off from the stormy outside world in order to protect it. However, in the end of times, the sanctity of Yerushalayim will no longer have to be protected from antagonistic forces. Rather, Yerushalayim will become a sanctified center whose holiness radiates outwards and spreads through the entire land.

May we merit to see such a Yerushalayim and such a world soon!

³ Zecharya 2:8.