



Noach Who Neglected to Pray to Save the People of His Generation from the Flood Reincarnated into Yonah HaNavi Who Was Thrown into the Sea to Quell Its Wrath

This week's parsha is parshas Noach. Regarding Noach's character, we find conflicting opinions. On the one hand, at the beginning of our parsha, it says (Bereishis 6, 9): **“אלה תולדות נח - נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו את האלקים התהלך נח”**—these are the offspring of Noach; Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with Hashem. This passuk portrays him as a tzaddik. On the other hand, we are taught in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a): **“תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל אף על נח נחתך גזר דין, אלא שמצא חן בעיני ה'”**. It was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael that Noach was also included in the decree to punish and destroy the world with the mabul; however, he was spared, since he found favor in the eyes of Hashem, as it states (ibid. 6, 7): **“I have reconsidered My having made them; but Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”**

So, how do we reconcile this discrepancy? On the one hand, the Torah explicitly attests to Noach's righteousness. Furthermore, he did not take part in any shape or form in the corrupt acts of his generation. So, why was he to be included in the cataclysmic decree? We must conclude that Noach had a serious flaw for which he deserved to be punished. Yet, he found favor in the eyes of Hashem and was spared? But why? After all, the Torah explicitly describes Hashem as a G-d (Devarim 10, 17): **“אשר לא ישא פנים ולא יקח שוחד”**—Who does not show favor and does not take a bribe.

Noach Was Guilty of Not Admonishing the People of His Generation and Not Praying on Their Behalf

It appears that we can explain the matter based on the commentaries of the Alshich HaKadosh and the Chasam Sofer,

zy”a. They point out that HKB”H could have spared Noach various other ways that would have been much simpler. For instance, He could have simply sent Noach someplace unaffected by the treacherous waters of the mabul or could have ordered the rains not to fall where Noach resided. Yet, HKB”H opted to save Noach by incarcerating him in an ark with animals and beasts for an entire year. This was undoubtedly a harrowing, trying ordeal. As the Midrash Tanchuma explains (Noach 2): **“אמרו רבותינו, י”ב חודש בתיבה לא ראה שינה לא ביום ולא לילה”**. Our Rabbis taught: During the twelve months in the “teivah,” Noach did not sleep by day or by night, since he was busy taking care of and feeding the animals that were with him. Evidently, since he secluded himself in his house and neglected to rebuke the people of his generation; he was punished “midah k'neged midah”—tit for tat—by being secluded in the “teivah.” That was his atonement.

The Yismach Moshe adds another significant point. The Zohar hakadosh (Noach 67b) notes that even though Noach was a tzaddik, he possessed a major character flaw. He neglected to pray for the people of his generation not to be exterminated. This is in stark contrast to Moshe Rabeinu, who beseeched HKB”H after the “cheit ha'eigel” to spare the people of Yisrael (Shemos 32, 32): **“ועתה אם תשא חטאתם, ואם אין”**—and now, if You would but bear their sin; but if not, erase me from Your book that You have written.

Accordingly, the Zohar hakadosh asserts that this is why the mabul is associated with Noach, as per the passuk in the haftorah (Yeshayah 54, 9): **“כי מי נח זאת לי אשר נשבעתי מעבור מי נח”**

“עוד על הארץ—for like the “waters of Noach” shall this be to Me, as I swore that the “waters of Noach” would never again pass over the earth. Noach could have averted the mabul with his prayers. Due to his failure to pray for his generation, Noach was included in the cataclysmic decree. This, however, begs the question: How did **Noach find favor in the eyes of Hashem?**

The Neshamah of Noach Reincarnated into the Prophet Yonah ben Amitai

With the utmost awe and reverence, we will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a precious, illuminating teaching from the sefer Birkas Shmuel (Shoftim), authored by Rabbi Aharon Shmuel Kaidanover, ztz”l. He begins by saying that he plans to reveal secrets related to reincarnation—“gilgulim”—that he was taught by his teachers and some that were revealed to him by Hashem. He claims that the neshamah of Noach reincarnated into the prophet Yonah ben Amitai. Due to his failure to pray on behalf of the people of his generation and encourage them to perform teshuvah, HKB”H brought the waters of the mabul to drown them. Hence, they are called the **“waters of Noach.”** Consequently, he was punished “measure for measure” by falling into the depths of the sea in the “gilgul” of Yonah. This is the implication of the passuk (Yonah 2, 4): **“כל משבריו וגיליו עלי—עברו”—all Your breakers and Your waves passes over me.**

We will now delight by delving deeper into his sacred insight. They illustrate the wonders of HKB”H, Who allows neshamos to reincarnate in future generations to make amends and rectify things that they failed to rectify in a previous “gilgul.” To facilitate the matter, let us first review some of the pesukim that describe what happened to Yonah HaNavi (ibid. 1, 1):

“ויהי דבר ה' אל יונה בן אמתי לאמר. קום לך אל נינוה העיר הגדולה וקרא עליה כי עלתה רעתם לפני. ויקם יונה לברוח תרשישה מלפני ה' וירד יפו וימצא אניה באה תרשיש... וה' הטיל רוח גדולה אל הים ויהי סער גדול בים והאניה חשבה להישבר. וייראו המלחים ויזעקו איש אל אלהיו ויטלו את הכלים אשר באניה אל הים להקל מעליהם ויונה ירד אל ירכתי הספינה וישכב וירדם.

ויקרב אליו רב החובל ויאמר לו מה לך נרדם קום קרא אל אלהיך אולי יתעשת האלהים לנו ולא נאבד. ויאמרו איש אל רעהו לכו ונפילה גורלות ונדעה בשלמי הרעה הזאת לנו ויפלו גורלות ויפול הגורל על יונה... ויאמרו אליו מה נעשה לך וישתוק הים מעלינו כי הים הולך וסער. ויאמר אליהם שאוני והטילני אל הים וישתק הים מעליכם כי יודע אני כי בשלי הסער הגדול הזה עליכם... וישאו את יונה ויטלוהו אל הים ויעמוד הים מזעפו.”

And the word of Hashem came to Yonah the son of Amitai saying: **“Go at once to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against her, for their wickedness has ascended before Me.”** But Yonah arose to flee to Tarshish away from Hashem. He went down to Yaffo and found a ship bound for Tarshish . . . Then Hashem cast a mighty wind upon the sea; there was a great tempest in the sea, and the ship was in danger of being shattered. The sailors became frightened, and they cried out, each to his own god; they flung the ship’s cargo overboard to make it lighter for them. Meanwhile, Yonah had gone down into the hold of the ship, and he lay down and fell asleep.

The captain went over to him and said to him, **“How can you sleep so soundly? Arise! Call to your G-d! Perhaps G-d will be kind to us and we will not perish. Then they said one to another, “Come, let us cast lots that we may determine because of whom this calamity is upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Yonah . . . They said to him, “What must we do to you so that the sea will subside from upon us?—for the sea grows stormier!” He said to them, “Pick me up and heave me into the sea, and the sea will calm down from upon you; for I know that it is because of me that this great tempest is upon you.” . . . So they lifted Yonah and heaved him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.**

Through the grace of G-d, the Birkas Shmuel teaches us that Yonah was the reincarnation and tikun of Noach. The sailors were compelled to throw him into the sea to atone for Noach’s failure to pray for the people of his generation to perform teshuvah, so that they would not have to be drowned in the waters of the mabul.

Upon further reflection, we find several similarities between Noach and Yonah HaNavi. The ship that Yonah boarded to flee from his calling is a definite allusion to the ark that saved Noach from the mabul. Yonah being thrown into the tempestuous sea alludes to the people of Noach’s generation who were thrown into the torrential waters of the mabul to drown.

Additionally, just as Noach neglected to rebuke the people of his generation and pray on their behalf, so, too, Yonah, his “gilgul,” was reluctant to go and rebuke the people of Nineveh as HKB”H

had commanded him to do. Furthermore, he failed to pray on their behalf to save them from annihilation until he was tossed into the sea and swallowed by a large fish. Only then did he go to Nineveh to admonish them and save them from annihilation. Thus, did he rectify the failure and flaw of Noach.

Now, consider the marvels of heavenly supervision. HKB”H orchestrated that Yonah be woken up by the captain of the ship, who said to him sharply: **“How can you sleep so soundly?”**—that is what you did in your incarnation as Noach; you fell asleep, as it were, and failed to perform your duty of protecting and praying for your fellow man. **“Arise! Call to your G-d! Perhaps G-d will be kind to us and we will not perish”**—like the people of the generation of the mabul did.

“He sent the ‘yonah’” Alludes to Yonah HaNavi

We will now provide substantiation for this fascinating claim of the Birkas Shmuel from the Tikunei Zohar (21). In his lengthy discussion of the prophecy of Yonah HaNavi, he says: **That Yonah (HaNavi) is the dove (“yonah”) mentioned in relation to Noach’s ark.** Based on this comment, I would like to suggest a novel interpretation of the passuk in our parsha (Bereishis 8, 8): **וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת הַיּוֹנָה מֵאֶתֹר לִרְאוֹת הַקֶּלַי הַמַּיִם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ—he sent out the “yonah” from him to see whether the waters had subsided from the face of the earth.** Upon realizing that he was incarcerated for twelve months in the “teivah” for neglecting to pray on behalf of the people of his generation, he was distraught for having caused their deaths. Hence, HKB”H showed him that he would be provided a tikun in his reincarnation as Yonah HaNavi.

Now, the waters of the mabul were furious with Yonah for being derelict in his duty to save his generation. After all, they were created to sustain life not to destroy it. As mentioned above, this is why Scripture refers to the mabul as the **“waters of Noach.”** Therefore, when he reincarnated into Yonah HaNavi and was thrown into the turbulent sea to atone for his previous neglect of duty, it says: **“The sea stopped its raging”**—i.e., it was finally appeased and no longer furious with Noach. The waters were confident that he would now fulfill his mission by going to save the people of Nineveh by arousing them to perform teshuvah and avoid extermination.

I would like to add another point based on a concept presented by both the Ramban and the Sforno. The Ramban writes (Bereishis 12, 6): **Know that all decisions of the guardian angels, when they proceed from a potential decree to a symbolic act, the decree will be effected in any case. It is for this reason that the prophets often perform some act in conjunction with the prophecies.** In other words, in order to trigger a miracle from above, a symbolic gesture—**“po’el dimyon”**—must be performed down below. The Sforno (Bamidbar 20, 8) suggests that the following are examples of symbolic gestures that were performed to trigger a miracle from G-d: (Shemos 4, 3) **“throw it to the ground,”** (ibid. 14, 16) **“raise your staff,”** and (ibid. 17, 6) **“you shall strike the rock.”**

Based on this concept, we can suggest that Noach performed a **“po’el dimyon”** by sending the dove out of the “teivah.” To make amends for his failure during the generation of the mabul, he performed a **“symbolic gesture”** related to his reincarnation as Yonah HaNavi. The “yonah” was sent to see **“הקלו המים מעל פני האדמה”**—if the distress and fury of the waters labelled the **“waters of Noach”** had subsided.

Why Yonah’s Life Was Saved by a Large Fish

In this vein, it gives me immense pleasure to explain why HKB”H arranged for Yonah HaNavi to be saved in the following manner (Yonah 2, 1): **וַיִּמָּן ה' דָּג גָּדוֹל לִבְלַע אֶת יוֹנָה וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמִעֵי הַדָּג: Hashem delegated a large fish to swallow Yonah, and Yonah remained in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights. Yonah prayed to Hashem, his G-d, from the belly of the fish.** Let us now refer to the fate of the fish during the mabul. It is written (Bereishis 7, 22): **כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמַת רוּחַ חַיִּים בָּאֵפִי: “all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of everything that was on dry land, died.** Based on the Gemara (Kiddushin 13a), Rashi comments on the words: **“That was on dry land”—but not the fish in the sea** (i.e., they did not die). The Ramban points out that this was a miracle. For, even though fish live in the water, the waters of the mabul were boiling hot; yet the fish were spared by swimming in waters with normal temperature.

The Mizrachi suggests another reason why the fish were not exterminated. The Torah teaches us that G-d decided to

wipe out civilization on earth (ibid. 6, 12): **”כי השחית כל בשר”**—**for all flesh had corrupted its way (upon the earth).** The Mizrachi notes that Rashi comments that this applied to **even domestic animals, beasts, and birds; they had relations with those which were not of their species;** whereas Rashi omits any mention of fish. Tosafos (B.K. 55a) write that fish only have relations with their own species. Accordingly, although Noach neglected to pray on behalf of the people of his generation, he did not cause any harm to the fish of that generation. Therefore, HKB”H specifically sent a fish to save Yonah, Noach’s “gilgul.”

Let us add one more significant point regarding the passuk quoted above: **”וימן ה’ דג גדול לבלע את יונה ויהי יונה במעי הדג שלשה ימים ושלשה לילות, ויתפלל יונה אל ה’ אלקיו ממעי הדגה.”** Rashi notes in the name of the Midrash that the text initially employs the masculine term **”דג גדול”** but concludes with the feminine term **”הדגה”**. To reconcile this discrepancy, Rashi explains that Yonah was initially swallowed by a large, male fish, where he had plenty of room in its spacious belly and did not feel any urgency to pray. Hence, HKB”H caused that fish to spit him out into the mouth of a female fish full of fetuses. There, he was confined in a tight space and prayed for help. But why did HKB”H orchestrate Yonah’s ordeal in this manner? Why didn’t HKB”H delegate the female fish to swallow Yonah from the start, so that he would start to pray immediately?

Based on what we have learned, we can propose that HKB”H deliberately arranged for Yonah to initially be swallowed by a male fish and subsequently by its female partner. HKB”H wanted the “gilgul” of Noach to be aware of the fact that fish only form unions with their own kind; that is why they were spared during the generation of the mabul and did not share the fate of the other living creatures, who behaved corruptly. This awareness was meant to stimulate him to perform teshuvah for failing to pray that the living creatures in his generation alter their corrupt ways. Had he done so, they would have been spared like the fish were.

The King of Nineveh Was Pharaoh Who Drowned the Newborn Males of Yisrael

Continuing on this sacred journey involving the fascinating phenomenon of the reincarnation of neshamos, we will now address the reluctance of Yonah HaNavi to go on the Almighty’s

mission to rebuke the people of Nineveh. Chazal explain the matter in the Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 11, 5). Yonah believed that the goyim would most likely heed his admonition and perform teshuvah. That would reflect poorly on the people of Yisrael who neglect to perform teshuvah; as a consequence, HKB”H would seek retribution from them.

Notwithstanding, I would like to add another intriguing explanation. We find an incredible chiddush concerning Pharaoh, the ruler of Mitzrayim. HKB”H saved him from drowning in the Yam Suf along with his people, and he became the ruler of Nineveh. Here is a paraphrase of a pertinent passage in the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 43):

Rabbi Nechuniah ben HaKaneh extols the virtue and power of teshuvah. He cites Pharaoh as an example. Even though he rebelled against the Almighty repeatedly, HKB”H saved him from among those who were dying. HKB”H did so, so that he would relate His power and valor to others.

He went and ruled in Nineveh. Its inhabitants were deceitful, stole from one another, and performed many criminal acts. When HKB”H sent Yonah to prophesy to them that they were going to be destroyed, Pharaoh heard about it, tore his garments, and donned a sackcloth and ashes. He announced a three-day fast for all of his people, and that anyone who did not comply would be burned to death. Their inhabitants numbered more than 120,000; G-d had mercy on them.

Amazingly, the Ba’al HaTurim (Shemos 14, 31) points out that the term **”ויאמינו”** only appears two times in the Tanach. The first time is in the narrative of Krias Yam Suf: **”ויאמינו בה”**—**and they believed (had “emunah”) in Hashem.** The second time is after Yonah prophesies to the people of Nineveh (Yonah 3, 5): **”ויאמינו אנשי נינוה באלקים”**—**the people of Nineveh believed in G-d.**

The Ba’al HaTurim explains the connection between these two traditions as follows: **The Midrash expounds (on the passuk Shemos 14, 28): «לא נשאר בהם עד אחד»—that only one of them remained, and it was Pharaoh. He then went to Nineveh and ruled there. This is why the people of**

Nineveh believed in G-d—because he recounted to them what he witnessed in Mitzrayim and at the sea.

It is important to point out that this is difficult to explain chronologically. After all, Pharaoh was the ruler of Mitzrayim prior to the exodus. So, he could not have actually ruled Nineveh in the times of Yonah. However, this really means that Pharaoh reincarnated into the king of Nineveh. Also, when the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer says that **"HKB"H saved him from among those who were dying,"** it implies that Pharaoh did not die an eternal death like the other Egyptians at the sea; instead, he reincarnated into the king of Nineveh.

We will now introduce a teaching from our master, the Arizal, in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Shemos). He contends that the neshamos of the generation of the mabul were actually elite neshamos; however, they fell into the clutches of the klipos and became corrupt. Since HKB"H is full of compassion and does not wish to banish any Jew, He arranged for these neshamos to reincarnate into the neshamos of Yisrael in Mitzrayim. There they were refined in the so-called "iron crucible." This explains why Pharaoh ordered all of his people (ibid. 1, 22): **"כל הבן היולד היאורה תשליכוהו"—every male child that will be born, you shall throw him into the river.** Pharaoh sought to drown them in water just like they were drowned in the generation of the mabul.

This is somewhat surprising. Since HKB"H arranged for them to reincarnate into neshamos of Yisrael in Mitzrayim for the sake of their tikun, how did Pharaoh succeed in drowning them? The answer is simple. In reality, Pharaoh only succeeded in drowning a very small minority whose moment of tikun had not yet arrived. Furthermore, as we learn in the Gemara (Sotah 11b), this decree was repealed on the day that Yocheved placed Moshe's basket on the bank of the river.

Pharaoh Intended to Prevent the Tikun of the Generation of the Mabul

But let us endeavor to explain Pharaoh's rationale for decreeing that every newborn male of Yisrael be thrown into the river. In Sha'ar HaKavanos (Pesach, Drush 1), the Arizal says: **Pharaoh harasha was a great sorcerer; he was without equal; he knew with his wisdom cryptic matters.** Accordingly, it is not far-fetched to suggest that he also knew

that Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim were reincarnations of the generation of the mabul. Hence, he expended every means to prevent them from being refined and achieving a tikun in Mitzrayim. So, just as they were drowned in the mabul, he strategically decreed to drown them in this gilgul, so that they would be denied their tikun. He made an obvious blunder, however. Since he mistakenly thought that Yisrael's savior had already perished, he saw no need to continue the malevolent decree. He figured that Yisrael would simply sink in the tumah of Mitzrayim without any tikun.

With this perspective, we can begin to comprehend the reluctance of Yonah HaNavi to go to Nineveh and motivate them to perform teshuvah. Since he was a "gilgul" of Noach, who needed to make amends for failing to save the people of his generation from drowning in the waters of the mabul, he harbored great animosity towards the king of Nineveh. For, as we have learned, he was actually a "gilgul" of Pharaoh, who tried to prevent the gilgulim of the generation of the mabul from achieving a tikun. Therefore, Yonah, the "gilgul" of Noach, did not want Pharaoh to perform teshuvah together with the people of Nineveh.

I believe that this interpretation is supported by the text. We find that even after Yonah HaNavi consented to complete the mission he had been assigned by HKB"H, he did not go directly to the king of Nineveh himself. Instead, he opted to announce his admonition from the outskirts of the city. Here is the pertinent text (Yonah 3, 1):

"וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֶל יוֹנָה שֵׁנִית לֵאמֹר, קוּם לָךְ אֶל נִינְוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה וְקְרֵא אֲלֶיהָ אֶת הַקְּרִיָּאָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי דֹבֵר אֵלֶיהָ. וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל נִינְוָה כְּדַבֵּר ה' וַיִּנְוָה הָיְתָה עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לְאַלְקִים מֵהֶלֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים. וַיַּחַל יוֹנָה לְבֹא בְּעִיר מֵהֶלֶךְ יוֹם אֶחָד וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וַיִּנְוָה נִהְפָּכָת. וַיֹּאמְרֵינוּ אֲנָשִׁי נִינְוָה בְּאַלְקִים וַיִּקְרְאוּ צוּם וַיִּלְבְּשׁוּ שָׂקִים מִגְדֻלָּם וְעַד קִטְנָם. וַיִּנְוּ הַדָּבָר אֶל מֶלֶךְ נִינְוָה וַיָּקָם מִכִּסְאוֹ וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶדְרֵתוֹ מֵעַל יוֹם וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאֹפֶר. וַיִּזְעַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנִינָה מִטֶּעַם הַמֶּלֶךְ וַגְּדָלִיו לֵאמֹר הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה הַבָּקָר וְהַצֹּאן אֵל יִטְעֲמוּ מֵאוֹמָה אֵל יָרְעוּ וּמִים אֵל יִשְׁתּוּ."

The word of Hashem came to Yonah a second time, saying: **"Arise! Go to Nineveh, the great city, and announce to her the proclamation that I tell you."** So Yonah arose and went to Nineveh, in accordance with G-d's word. Now, Nineveh was an enormously great city, a three-day journey. Yonah commenced to enter the city, a distance

of one day's journey, then he called out and said, "Forty days more and Nineveh will be overturned!" The people of Nineveh believed in G-d, so they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, from their great to their small. The matter reached the king of Nineveh; he rose from his throne, removed his robe from upon himself, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on ashes. He had it promulgated and declared in Nineveh by the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying: "The man and the animal, the herd and the flock shall not taste anything; they shall neither graze nor drink water."

This suggests that he did not wish to speak to the king of Nineveh; so he publicly addressed the populace instead. Ultimately, the people informed the king of the prophecy. As explained above, Yonah delivered his prophecy in this manner, because he did not want the "gilgul" of Pharaoh to perform teshuvah and elude punishment.

This illuminates for us the teaching of the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael presented at the beginning of this essay: **The decree was issued even against Noach**—because he was guilty of neglecting to admonish the people of his generation and neglected to pray for them to perform teshuvah to avoid annihilation; **however, he found favor in the eyes of Hashem**—since HKB"Y foresaw, so to speak, that Noach was destined to reincarnate into Yonah HaNavi; in that merit, he was sentenced to a year in the "teivah" instead of death in the mabul. When Noach became aware of this incredible, inexplicable reason for his salvation, he performed a "po'el dimyon"—a symbolic gesture: **"He sent the 'yonah'"** out of the "teivah." Thus, he alluded to his future "gilgul" as Yonah HaNavi. He sent the dove **"to see if the water had subsided"**—to see if the **"waters of Noach"** had been appeased; and, indeed, **"the wrath of the sea had subsided."**



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