

October 20, 2012

Noach (Genesis 6:9-11:32)

Starting from the opening of the parashah, which calls Noah a “righteous man in his generation,” we studied rabbinic commentary about the quality of Noah’s righteousness. Since both Abraham and Noah were described as walking with God, we looked at what might have made the rabbis think so much more highly of Abraham than they did of Noah. Both men followed God’s instructions; both men were—as all our ancestors are—imperfect. What was it that caused our commentators to regard Abraham as someone on a higher level than Noah?

We also explored the phrase “in his generation,” asking whether, if someone was said to be righteous at a particular time, did that necessarily mean they would be righteous in any time, or could their righteousness have been more situational? We tried to identify some historical figures whose level of righteousness might have been changed, or might have stayed the same, if they had been removed to a different point in history.

In addition, we looked at God’s promise to Noah, after the flood, never to destroy all of humanity again. That led to a discussion of the possibility of God’s evolution over the course of the Torah, implying that as we learned how to become God’s people, God may have been learning how to become our God.