Noach

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Noach

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These are the generations of Noach; Noach was a man righteous, perfect in his
generations; with Elokim walked Noach.39

1. Rashi

There are no supererogatory letters, much less words or phrases, in the Torah.40 What
other generation could have Noach lived in other than his own? Thus, the Sages of the Talmud41
comment on the apparent extraneous clause “in his generations.”42

According to Rabi Yochanan,43 “in his generations” is not de trop, but rather, indicative
of Noach’s relative stature. He was considered perfectly righteous in the context of his
generation. Subsequently (e.g., the generation of Avraham Avinu,44 Moshe Rabeinu,45 or Shmuel
HaNavi46), Noach’s relative level of righteousness would not have been counted among the
pious.

39 B’rashis 6:9
40 Talmud Sanhedrin 99a, commenting on Ba’Midbar 15:31, indicates disbelief in even a single letter (Dikduk) of
the Torah constitutes Apikorsis. See Maharsha who notes the verse says, “Word of HaShem,” which is singular, not
plural.
41 Sanhedrin 108a
42 ‘Generations’ is plural because Noach lived in the generation of Mesushelach, Lemach, his own, and following
the Flood, S’forno to B’rashis 6:9. (Even Ezra to this verse notes Noach lived until Avraham Avinu was 58, and the
mnemonic is ‘Avraham Avinu ben N’Ch.’) In Noam Elimelech (also known as Sefer Shel Tzadikim), Rabbi
Elimelech of Lizensk (1717 C. E. – 1787 C. E.) acknowledges this point, but states that Rashi’s explanation (see end
of this section in the body of the text) would apply according to the reason cited by the S’forno, Even Ezra, and
others even if ‘generations’ was singular. Noam Elimelech opines that each generation has a specific Mitzvah to
fulfill, in addition to all others. The reason ‘generations’ is plural is to indicate the specific Mitzvah to be fulfilled
was the same in all four of the generations that Noach lived (Wagschal edition, 1942 C. E., p. 5).
43 He was a student of Rabi Yehudah HaNasi [President of the Sanhedrin, the redactor of the Mishnah (Bava Metzia
86a), and last of the Tannaim]. (Following the leadership of Rabi Yehudah HaNasi in Eretz Yisrael were Rav Afas,
Rabi Chanina, and then Rabi Yochanan – Talmud Kesuvos 103b, Igeres Rav Sherira Gaon). Thus, Rabi Yochanan
was a first generation Amora. His teachings formed the basis of the Talmud Yerushalmi (Talmud Yerushalmi Yoma
82b, Kiddushin 31b, Bava Kama 117a).
44 Rashi to B’rashis 6:9
45 S’forno to B’rashis 6:8
46 Ibid
Reish Lakish\(^{47}\) concurs that “in his generations” contributes to defining Noach’s stature. However, he demurs with an a minore ad maius argument. If Noach was able to remain perfectly righteous in his generation, the nadir in human degradation, then how much more so would he have been perfectly righteous had he lived in a generation that was not so evil.

Among the principles in traversing from theoretical jurisprudence in the Talmud to its application in the Shulchan Aruch is the general dictum that wherever there is a disagreement in law\(^{48}\) between Rabi Yochanan and Reish Lakish, the ruling follows Rabi Yochanan. It is surprising, therefore, that Rashi,\(^{49}\) in his commentary on this verse, cites both Reish Lakish’s and Rabi Yochanan’s explanations.

Despite citing both views, Rashi appears to follow Rabi Yochanan’s position, based on his commentary on the concluding clause “with Elokim walked Noach”:

And with Avraham it says (below 24:40) ‘before whom I walk.’ Noach necessitated support to uphold himself,\(^{50}\) but Avraham strengthened himself and walked in righteousness by himself.

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\(^{47}\) Rabi Shimon ben Lakish was Rabi Yochanan’s protégé, and eventual colleague and brother-in-law.

\(^{48}\) Is judging righteousness a matter of Din (Halachah) or Derech (Hashkafa)? The dictum only applies to Din. In this case it is a matter of Din, because the Mishnah (Talmud Sanhedrin 107b) states the generation of the Flood will not have a share in the World to Come, “nor will they stand (again) [i.e., resurrected] for judgment” because they were already judged. The Gemara asks “who enumerated” the listings of those who were judged thusly in the Mishayos in Talmud Sanhedrin Chapter 11? Rav Ashi (who along with Ravina redacted the Talmud Bavli) answers it was the Anshei K’nessess HaHadolah (Talmud Sanhedrin 104b, & Rashi loc. cit.; this was an expansion of the Sanhedrin’s 71 to 120* Sages by Ezra* as early as 520 B. C. E., and they functioned as such until about 70 C. E.), among whom were N’vi’im (e.g., Chaggai, Zechariah, Malachi) and those who had Ruach HaKodesh. The ensuing Gemara indicates G-d concurs with all their rulings on this matter, with the exception of matters pertaining to Shlomo HaMelech.

*R’ Meir Holder’s view is “[N]ot all of them were members at the same time or lived in the same place. It is likely that the membership of the Sanhedrin never exceeded the prescribed number of seventy-one at any one time,” (1986, History of the Jewish people: From Yavneh to Pumbedisa, Artscroll History Series, p 88). However, this statement in internally consistent with his rubric of “the fallacy of name-counting as historical proof (p. 121), wherein he takes to task historians who attempt to prove numbers on the basis of extant names.

\(^{49}\) To B’rashis 6:9. Rashi is the acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yarchi ben Yitzchak (1040 C.E. – 1105 C.E.), and Rabon Shel Yisrael. He is given appellations such as the “definitive commentator” or “exegete par excellent” on the Tanach (Jewish Scriptures) and Talmud. The Sh’loh, Rabbi Yeshiah HaLevi Horowitz (1565 C. E. -1630 C. E.), author of Shnei Luchos HaBris, states (M’sheches Shavuos 30:4) Rashi wrote his commentary with Ruach HaKodesh (while being imbued with Divine Spirit). There are hundreds of super commentaries by Rabbinical authorities on Rashi.

\(^{50}\) Many M’Forshim raise the question and provide various answers arising from the verse, “I have seen you are righteous before Me,” (B’rashis 7:1) which equates Noach’s level of righteousness with Avraham Avinu. However, this assessment was made after building the Ark with regard to building the Ark: “And so did Noach; according to all that which Elokim commanded thus he did.” The context in the body of the text pertains to Noach’s status prior to building the Ark.
Noach’s righteousness did not arise from self-development\(^{51}\) such as that achieved by Avraham Avinu. Instead, it was merely the result of a gracious gift from HaShem.\(^{52}\) The implication is that without this gift, Noach would not have been considered righteous even in his own generation.

Why, then, does Rashi also cite the opposing opinion of Reish Lakish, that how much more so Noach would have been perfectly righteous in other generations? Furthermore, why does Rashi reverse the order of the two opinions? The Talmud first records Rabi Yochanan’s interpretation, and then follows with the interpretation of Reish Lakish. Why does Rashi cite Reish Lakish first instead of the order it appears in the Talmud?\(^{53,54}\)

2. Deeds

The Targum Onkelos\(^{55}\) literally\(^{56}\) translates the penultimate verse\(^{57}\) of the previous Torah portion, Parashas B’rashis, that HaShem reconsidered\(^{58}\) or regretted creating and thus planned to obliterate mankind.\(^{59}\) That verse immediately follows the assessment that mankind’s wickedness

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\(^{51}\) The S’fas Emes, AMv’R Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter (1847 C. E. – C. E. 1905), the 2nd Rebbe of Ger, notes that of course all mankind requires the support of G-d. Some, however, require constant support (i.e., Noach), while others are better equipped to use free choice correctly without constant support (i.e., Avraham Avinu).

\(^{52}\) B’rashis 6:8

\(^{53}\) Ramban to B’rashis 6:9 cites both views, also in the reverse order, stating “thus is the language of Rashi,” obviating the possibility that this is an errant Girsah in the text of Rashi. Ramban does not favor either interpretation. He explains “in his generations” to mean that Noach alone was sufficiently righteous to be “worthy of being saved from the Flood.” He says “let not the words of our Rabbis [Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 32:10] be troublesome” regarding Mesushelach, for although he was righteous it was not of sufficient magnitude to be saved from the Flood.

\(^{54}\) Given “in his generations” may refer to Noach’s credit, numerous M’Forshim raise the rhetorical question of the necessity to interpret it to Noach’s discredit, especially because the verse calls him righteous. AMv’R Rabbi Yisroel Friedman (1854 C. E. – 1934 C. E.), 2nd Rebbe of Chortkov, invokes this concept based on the fashion in which Rashi summarizes the Gemara: “There are from our Rabbis who explain it to his credit… and there are who explain it to his discredit,” omitting the phrase “from our Rabbis” in the latter clause. The Rebbe M’Chortkov concludes from this Rashi that when an interpretation comes to discredit, where it could just as easily have come to give credit, it removes the interpreter from the category of “our Rabbis.” Although this is a powerful lesson, Rashi nevertheless cites that interpretation for the reason explained in the body of the text.

\(^{55}\) He was a nephew of Titus. After his Geirus to Judaisim, he translated the Torah into the vernacular of the Talmudic period, which was Aramaic. His primary style of translation is based on the literal meaning of the words.

\(^{56}\) As opposed to the Targum Yonason ben Uziel, whose translation usually contains more allegorical or homiletic exegesis than does the Targum Onkelos (Likutei Sichos to Parashos Noach, Vol. 15, p.27). In this case, the Targum Yonason also translates literally, but the Targum Yerushalmi as amended by Pirush Yerushalmi interprets figuratively – ‘cause grief or sorrow,’ but not obliterate.)

\(^{57}\) B’rashis 6:7

\(^{58}\) Regarding the use of anthropomorphisms, Ramban and Even Ezra to B’rashis 6:6 (“And repented HaShem”) state “The Torah speaks in the language of man,” meaning such terminology is invoked only to communicate, but not to be taken literally.

\(^{59}\) Rashi translates the verse figuratively: “He is dust and I will bring water on him and dissolve him…I have considered what to do for I made them.” There is no verse that states G-d retracted the regret, and yet, mankind was
filled their hearts with evil. This suggests that the reason HaShem would bring the Flood was to punish mankind for committing evil deeds.

The Ohr HaChayim disagrees with this reason, because children who had not reached majority should have been exempt. Noach, and anyone else who had not committed a capital offense, should have been excuplated. Instead, he points out that the repetition of regret in the next verse, without a reiteration of their evil deeds, indicates mankind would be subjected to this decree regardless of their behavior. Noach would have been included had he not “found grace in the view of HaShem.” It was not Noach’s deeds (righteousness) that saved him, because the Flood was not a response to human deeds. The Flood was a judgment on mankind per se. Noach was saved only due to the gift of graciousness from HaShem.

Noach’s righteousness, however, was not of little consequence. Its magnitude is apparent from a heavenly conversation in the Midrash between him and Moshe Rabeinu. The former claims to have been greater than the latter, because he was saved from the Flood. The retort was that Noach was only able to save himself but was incapable of delivering his generation, whereas Moshe Rabeinu saved himself and his people from destruction at the incident of the
molted calf of gold. The *Midrash* concludes the one who saves both himself and his vessel on the raging seas is more deserving of praise than the one who only saves himself. Nevertheless, among the two, it was Noach who was worthy to be charged with the salvation of all mankind, not *Moshe Rabeinu*. Furthermore, had Noach not been at least as righteous as *Moshe Rabeinu*, a retort would have been moot, or at least the nature of the retort (i.e., who receives more praise) would have been very different.

Noach’s level of righteousness should not be questioned. Mankind was no longer called “the generations of Adam,” but instead was called by his name: “the generations of Noach.” The laws of nature were changed on his account. The *Midrash* notes that animals, which had rebelled from service due to Adam, returned to do the work of mankind due to Noach. The frequently devastating flash floods that threatened mankind ceased due to Noach. The *Zohar* adds that the curse of the earth since the days of Adam, that produced thorns when wheat was sown, was removed due to Noach.

The *Torah* classifies Noach as an “*Ish Tzadik*” (righteous man in deed) *Tamim* (wholehearted), certainly worthy to be saved from the Flood. It was obvious to observers that

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72 Loc. cit. 32:4

73 This is a strange choice of analogy for a retort to Noach, who spent 120 years building a vessel that saved representatives of the entire animal kingdom. Perhaps the double entendre is intended to teach that true salvation only applies to mankind, not animals or objects. This is supported by the *Alshech* to Noach, who writes (a) “*Asei L’cha*” (“Make for yourself,” Noach 6:14) teaches the ark was made to save ‘yourself,’ i.e., to save mankind, not animals, despite the ark’s dimensions and layout, and b) because animals were only created to benefit mankind there would have been no purpose in saving them after the demise of mankind.

74 The *Rosh* (to B’rashis 6:8) unequivocally states “Noach was from among the righteous.” *Da’as Z’kanim M’Ba’alei HaTosafos* (to B’rashis 6:9) state, “And when a person’s name is mentioned twice in sequence it is known that person is righteous.” *Rachmal* (Derech HaShem II 4:3), however, lists the righteous who reproached the wicked, from Adam to the generation of the Tower of Baval as Chanoch, Mesushelach, Shem, and Ever, but curiously omits Noach even though that was his occupation for 120 years.

75 Although “*B’nai Adam*” can also uttered derogatorily, referring to Adam’s sin (*Zohar* 1:60b).

76 This status continued essentially until the *Navi Yechezkiel*, at which time *Yisrael* is then called Adam (e.g., Yechezkiel 34:31, 36:14). Similarly, the *Talmud Y’vamos* states, “You are called Adam, but the nations of the world are not called Adam.”

77 *Zohar* 1:60b

78 *B’rashis Rabbah* 25:2

79 58b

80 Or rye-grass, *Midrash B’rashis Rabbah* 28:8

81 1:58b

82 *S’forno* to B’rashis 6:9

83 The *Ksav Sofer* (Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyomin Sofer, 1815 C. E. – C. E. 1871) to *Even Ezra* on this verse notes that when Noach’s level of righteousness is restated in *B’rashis* 7:1 the term ‘*Tamim*’ is not necessary and is omitted. In the first verse it is needed because Noach’s righteous was assessed from the perspective of those in his generation who could only observe his deeds but could not know the feelings in his heart; whereas in the latter verse, Noach’s righteousness was assessed by G-d Who knows the feelings in his heart.
the Sh’chinah hovered over him. However, his personal merit may not have extended to his wife, three sons, or their wives. The grace Noach found in the view of HaShem may have been necessary for their salvation. When the Midrash says, in the name of Rabi Chanina, that Noach had not an ounce of merit, it can be interpreted to mean his deeds, meritorious as they were, paled in comparison with the grace he found in the view of HaShem, which thereby was the salvation of his family.

3. Deeds vs. Grace

The Midrash astutely observes that it was Noach who found grace in the view of HaShem, not HaShem Who found grace in Noach. What did Noach do that found grace?

84 Based on the meaning of Tamim in Talmud Avoda Zorah 10; Avraham Ibn Ezra (cited by Ramban) to B’rashis 6:9; S’forno to B’rashis 6:9. However, Ramban to B’rashis 6:9, based on Yecheskel 28:15, rejects the meaning of Tamim as it relates to the heart, in favor of wholehearted in ways (i.e., deeds), as noted in the body of the text. The Zohar I:59b interprets Tamim to mean Noach was born circumcised.

85 However, the Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 28:8 concludes Noach was not saved because of his merit.

86 S’forno to B’rashis 6:8. Ramban to B’rashis 9:8 notes by that time none of his sons had yet reached the level of prophecy (and his son Cham would never obtained that level). [His son Shem (Malkitzedek) was righteous, prophesied for over 400 years (Meam Loez), and along with his grandson Ever established an academy in which Avraham Avinu was the star pupil.]

87 The Nasi prior to Rabi Yochanan (Kesuvos 103b)

88 B’rashis Rabbah 29:1

89 Alshech, based on the doubling of Noach’s name in B’rashis 6:9, concludes that the sons were actually righteous in their own right, and it was for that reason they were saved.

90 The Nasi prior to Rabi Yochanan (Kesuvos 103b)

91 B’rashis Rabbah 29:1

92 Loc. cit. 29:3.

93 As contrasted with Avraham Avinu (Nechemia 9:8), Dovid HaMelech (Tehilim 89:21), and [the B’nai] Yisrael (Hoshea 9:10), where the verses state that HaShem found favor in them.

94 There are other opinions regarding Noach’s merit. For example, Meam Loez to B’rashis 6:8 cites opinions that Noach merited to be saved from the Flood only in order that eventually Moshe would be his descendent [or, as noted in Sha’ar HaGilgulim (Hakdama 29) that eventually Moshe Rabeinu would be his (and his son Shem’s) reincarnation]; or that Noach, who ‘lost’ favor by sinning as much as everyone else in his generation, ‘found’ favor when he repented and became wholehearted in his ways. Meam Loez, however, rejects those opinions (6:9), and states that Noach’s righteous ways were publicized and well known to his contemporaries, who observed him tirelessly and meticulously working on the Ark for 120 years.

*According to the Ari Zal, Sefer HaLikutim to Parashos Yisro, Moshe was also “B’sod Hevel,” and his father-in-law Yisro was a reincarnation of Kayin.

95 B’rashis 6:8
examination of the generation of the Flood in terms of Sur Mei’Ra may provide insights, and the Talmud\(^{96}\) provides a series of such possibilities.

The generation of the Flood became arrogant due to the bounty G-d lavished on them. The Talmud associates the depiction of calamities enumerated in Eyov\(^{97}\) with their arrogance. This was despite, according to the Maharal\(^{98}\), the abundance of prosperity enjoyed by that generation was as close to living again in the Gan\(^{99}\) of Eden since Adam was cast out. “Wheat grew as large as trees, and its kernels were [the size of] melons.”\(^{100}\) Yet, they shouted:

Remove Yourself from us! And knowledge of Your ways – we have no desire!

What is Shagai\(^{101}\) (Alm-ghty) that we should serve Him and how will it help to pray to Him? We have no needs except [perhaps] for a drop of rain, and [not even that, because] we have rivers and streams to supply ourselves from them!\(^{102}\)

Because they provoked G-d with the bounty of water, the retort was “And I, behold I will bring the Flood of waters.”\(^{103}\) Perhaps, then, Noach’s grace was he as the sole exception, for instead of being arrogant, (and even though it was his inventions of the spade and hoe\(^{104}\) that brought about much of that generation’s bounty and leisure), “with Elokim walked Noah.”

The Talmud\(^{105}\) and Midrash\(^{106}\) explain that the perversion of the generation of the Flood was sexual immorality,\(^{107}\) based on the verse “The earth was corrupt.”\(^{108}\) Perhaps, then, Noach’s grace was he was the sole exception, having remained chaste\(^{109}\) for nearly half a millennia.\(^{110}\)

\(^{96}\) To Sanhedrin 108a, based on Eyov 21:7 & ff. as explained by the Marasha.

\(^{97}\) 21: 7, 9, 10-15; 36:11

\(^{98}\) To Sanhedrin 108a

\(^{99}\) Shmuel bar Nachmani (Talmud B’rachos 34b) states Adam lived in the Gan, which is not the same as Eden. No human eyes have seen Eden. Chassidus differentiates between Gan Eden Tachtone (corporal) and Gan Eden Elyone (supernal); see further Ramban to B’rashis 4:13, Ramchal’s (Rabi Moshe Chaimuzzato, 1707 C. E. –1746 C. E.) Ma’amor Halkarim Chapter 5.

\(^{100}\) Meam Loez to B’rashis 2:13

\(^{101}\) Or Shakai. The “g” or “k” are euphemisms for “d” that are used to avoid spelling the Name of G-d.

\(^{102}\) Talmud Sanhedrin 108a

\(^{103}\) B’rashis 6:17

\(^{104}\) Zohar I:97b, Rashi to B’rashis 5:29

\(^{105}\) Sanhedrin 108a

\(^{106}\) B’rashis Rabbah 28:8

\(^{107}\) According to the Ari Zal (Likutei Torah to Parashas Noach), the specific sin was wasteful emissions.

\(^{108}\) Ibid 6:11

\(^{109}\) The Torah itself testifies to Noach’s sexual purity by calling him Tzadik (the manifestation of the S’phere of Yesod), Ari Zal Sefer HaLikutim to Parashos Noach.

\(^{110}\) He was born in 2705 B. C. E., and married Na’amaa (Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 23:3, Rashi to B’rashis 4:22) in 2207 B. C. E., which is 498 years. His sons, Yaphes, Cham, and Shem, were born in 2205, 2204, and 2203 B. C. E.,
This was more than two and a half\textsuperscript{111} times longer than Mesushelach who was the second chashest person recorded by the Torah.

The verse in B’rashis says “the earth is filled with violent plunder (Chamas)\textsuperscript{112} because of them, and behold I will destroy them from the earth.”\textsuperscript{113} The Talmud interprets Chamas to mean public robbery with the use of force (Gazel).\textsuperscript{114} Despite all their previous transgressions,\textsuperscript{115} the judgment of the generation of the Flood was “not sealed until they stretched forth their hands”\textsuperscript{116} in open armed robbery. Perhaps, then, Noach’s grace was he was the sole exception, as the K’li Yikar\textsuperscript{117} notes “Noach never stole anything from others.”

The Talmud\textsuperscript{118} apparently\textsuperscript{119} concludes that despite the fact that Noach did not do any of that evil, he was nevertheless “sealed with the [same] decree of punishment [of the Flood] as it states, ‘Is not Noach among them [sharing their destiny]?’”\textsuperscript{120}

Therefore, instead of Sur Mei’Rah, focus on A’sei Tov. The Ohr HaChaiyim\textsuperscript{121} states there are certain Mitzvos that have the unique characteristic of generating grace in the view of G-d.\textsuperscript{122} (This implies the special Mitzvos must be found among the ‘Seven Mitzvos of Noach.’\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{111} Noach’s age 498 ÷ Mesushelach’s age 187 ≈ 2.53
\textsuperscript{112} The Ba’al HaTurim notes Chamas is the Gematria of Mai Noach (Waters of Noach), and it is also the Gematria of Gehinom.
\textsuperscript{113} 6:13
\textsuperscript{114} The Rambam (Hilchos G’naiva 1:3) differentiates between a Ganav who steals secretly vs. a Gazlan who steals in public with force.
\textsuperscript{115} Alshech to B’rashis 6:9-13 explains that violence was more serious than sexual promiscuity. Both lead to spiritual destruction, but the former also leads to physical destruction.
\textsuperscript{116} Talmud Sanhedrin 108a
\textsuperscript{117} To B’rashis 6:9
\textsuperscript{118} Sanhedrin 108a
\textsuperscript{119} The M’suros HaShas states the ten words on the Daf regarding this entry are not found in some manuscripts, and hence, they appear in parentheses in the standard edition of the Vilna Shas. If the quote stands, then the explanation of Noach’s grace remains unanswered.
\textsuperscript{120} The latter clause is based on Yechezkiel (7:11), “There is no longing among them.” ‘Longing’ is spelled Nun Hei-Dagesh, which is pronounced the same as Noach (Nun Ches), meaning “There is no Noach among them.”
\textsuperscript{121} To B’rashis 6:7
\textsuperscript{122} Similarly, there are certain deeds which cause a person to lose a share in the World to Come, Talmud Sanhedrin 99a, Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 3:14.
\textsuperscript{123} Rambam, Hilchos M’lachim 9:1. Actually, the special Mitzvos must be among the first six, which are the “Six Mitzvos of Adam” (Talmud Sanhedrin 56b to B’raishis 2:16; Sanhedrin 38b). They are prohibitions against: (1) idol worship, (2) cursing G-d, (3) murder, (4) incest and adultery, (5) theft; and requirement to: (6) establish courts and laws. The last Mitzvah (7), the prohibition of eating flesh torn from a living animal, wasn’t given to Noach until after the Flood. Hence, it could not have initially been one of the special Mitzvos. The reward for Gentiles keeping these seven commandments is T’chias Ha’Meisim and Olam HaBa if they are done so because G-d commanded them (Rambam Loc. cit. 8:11; if it’s adherence is merely an intellectual choice the reward is only the same as that for all
4. Grace

It is not necessary to resolve the matter of absolute vs. relative level of righteousness to understand the continuum of grace. It is a four-tiered hierarchy of successively higher levels of favor, as explained in the Midrash:128

a. The lowest rung is expressed by Rav Huna, Rav Pinchas, Rav Chananan, and Rav Hoshaia, who do not explain the nature of Noach’s grace. Either there is no answer, or they are unwilling to reveal it.

b. The second lowest rung is expressed by Rabi Yochanan. Based on Yosef HaTzadik who “found grace in his sight,”129 Rabi Yochanan says the nature of Noach’s grace is analogous to a servant who finds grace in the eyes of his master who accepts his service.

c. The second highest rung is expressed by Reish Lakish. Based on Esther HaMalkah who “found favor in the sight of all who looked at her,”130 Rabi Shimon ben Lakish says the nature of Noach’s grace is analogous to a woman who finds grace in the eyes of the man who marries her.

d. The highest rung is expressed by the Chachamim who say the nature of Noach’s grace is analogous to the man who gives his daughter in marriage to his son-in-law and thereby propagates the family of mankind.
5. Clalli Rashi\textsuperscript{131}

Clalli Rashi notes that because Rashi is exact, it is appropriate to inquire “What is the source of the words of our Sages of blessed memory that Rashi chooses to cite?” and related questions.\textsuperscript{132,133} Rashi’s source is the Talmudic debate on Noach’s absolute vs. relative righteousness (deeds). That same source follows immediately with a repetition of the debate (with added detail) in the names of Rabi Chanina\textsuperscript{134} and Rabi Oshaiya, respectively. There is no general dictum regarding the law when they differ.\textsuperscript{135}

However, the taxonomy of grace is located in a different source, which is the Midrash.\textsuperscript{136} The nature of Noach’s grace was at the highest level, because G-d gave His earth to him to

\textsuperscript{131} In 1964 (C. E.), AMv’R Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe, began providing extensive systematic super commentary, known as ‘Rashi Sichos,’ based on Rashi’s system of commentary. Many were published in the Likutei Sichos series. Some were translated (e.g., the Sichos in English series; “Studies in Rashi” (Kehot Publication Society, 2003) translated by my dear neighbor Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Kagan, ZTz’L, author of The Lamplighter, KPS, 1988; and the multi-volume series A Thought for the Week). The system was compiled in a five volume series titled Biurim L’Pirush Rashi Al HaTorah. The questions on Rashi raised in the body of the text, however, are not discussed in those sources. The proposed resolution, therefore, is based on Clalli Rashi (1979, 1991 C. E., Kehot Publication Society), the principles the Rebbe enumerated as compiled by HaRav Tuvia Blau.

\textsuperscript{132} Introduction, p. 13

\textsuperscript{133} Rashi does not insert the clause “Davar Acher” between the two opinions. That phrase is used when there are two separate citations, the first is primary with a limitation, and the second is secondary but answers that limitation. In this case, there is only one citation (Talmud Sanhedrin 108a) which contains two opinions.

\textsuperscript{134} He was the Nasi prior to Rabi Yochanan, Igeres Rav Sherira Gaon.

\textsuperscript{135} The Talmudic debate between Rabi Yochanan and Reish Lakish is also restated in the Midrash between Rav Yehudah and Rav Nechemiah, respectively, and there is no general dictum on ruling between them.

\textsuperscript{136} B’rashis Rabbah 29:4. The obvious question is how can the prevailing view be based on the Midrash, when generally the resolution in Halacha where it differs with the Talmud favors the latter? The answer is there are exceptions.

For example, in Hilchos Bais HaB’chirah 2:1 the Rambam states Adam was created on what would eventually be the location of the Mizbayach. Although he doesn’t cite a source (which is only done in the Mishnah Torah if it will clarify the Halacha, Likutei Sichos Erev Rosh HaShana 5723), the source is obviously the Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 14:8 which states Adam “was created on the place of his atonement.” The Talmud Sanhedrin 38b, however, indicates Adam was created in the Gan of Eden! The Rambam’s intent in the Mishnah Torah is to deliver Piskei Dinim, not to relate opinions on history, and thus it may be concluded that the Rambam in this case rules in favor of the Midrash over the Talmud.

Another example arises from the Ra’avad’s comment (on the Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 8:2) regarding the Talmud Sanhedrin 93b which states Bar Kochba was killed by the Chachamim because he could not substantiate his Messianic claims. This view is contrasted with the Midrash Rabbah Eicha which states he was killed by non-Jews (which is just one of many details that differ between the two versions.) According to the Kesef Mishnah (on the Rambam Hilchos Malachim 11), the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 9; Hilchos Malachim 12:2) follows the view of the Midrash (which also indicates the wondrous descriptions of Y’mos HaMoshiach are only allegorical and not literal, in accordance with the position of Shmuel). Again, the Rambam in not relating opinions on history, but invokes the Midrash over the Talmud when ruling that even Y’mos HaMoshiach a sword is not an ornament (and hence must be beaten into a plowshare), and thus is not permitted to be worn on Shabbos.
propagate the family of mankind. This is the view of the Chachamim. The general dictum regarding Rabi Yochanan and Reish Lakish does not apply in this Midrash, because the majority view is not according to either – instead it is according to the Chachamim.

The foregoing resolution, therefore, prevails wherever the matter of grace finds its application in law. This includes the debate on Noach’s credit (his deeds were worthy on the absolute scale and grace was a result) or discredit (his deeds were worthy only on a relative scale of his generation and grace was his true salvation). Free from the general dictum, therefore, Rashi is able to follow principles underlying his system of commentary.

a. Rashi follows P’shuto Shel Mikra, as Mar bar Rav Huna says, “A verse never departs from its plain meaning.”137,138 “In his generations” follows the Torah’s testimony that Noach was righteous, and the plain meaning is Noach was righteous without qualification.139 This accords with Reish Lakish’s view.

b. Rashi addresses his commentary to “Ben Chamesh L’Mikrah”140 – a child of five years, because the Torah should be understandable at that age. “In his generations” cannot be a qualification, because that would confuse the child who has already been told “Noach found grace in the view of HaShem,”141 and soon will reach the verse when HaShem says, “I have seen that you are righteous.”142 This, too, accords with Reish Lakish’s view.

Why does Rashi bring Rabi Yochanan’s view altogether? The complete verse the child will soon reach is “I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.” If the child asks why there is a second occurrence of Noach’s righteousness being couched in terms of “his generation,” an answer143 can be given according to the view of Rabi Yochanan. However, this is only a secondary explanation, and therefore, Rashi brings Reish Lakish’s explanation first.

(These exceptions bring added meaning to the words of Rav Dimi in the Talmud Sanhedrin 100a: “What is the reason that you are not familiar with the Agad’ata?” Without the study of the Midrash, these Halachos of the Rambam cannot be understood.)

137 Talmud Shabbos 63a; Talmud Yevamos 11b, 24a
138 The Igeres HaRav Sherira Goan lists this as the 14th of 23 (there are more) underlying principles, in addition to Rabi Yishmael’s 13 hermeneutical rules, of Talmudic interpretation.
139 As the Zohar I:59b states, “Noach was a righteous man – certainly so!”
140 Pirkei Avos 5:22
141 Torah T’mimah to B’rashis 6:8 states Noach’s righteousness was insufficient only according to the interpretation that “in his generations” is to Noach’s discredit, but the plain meaning, which is to his credit, does not follow that view.
142 B’rashis 7:1
143 There is another plain answer that could be given to the child, but it does not fully comport with Rabi Yochanan’s view. Noach was perfectly righteous in “his generation” prior to the Flood, but was not perfectly righteous in “his generation” after the Flood. The phrase “in his generations” prior to the Flood simply means all future generations are to be issued from him [through his sons] (Zohar I:59b). “His generation” after the Flood pertains to the matter of planting a vineyard, either because (a) previously mankind had only planted single vines (Ramban to B’rashis 19:20) but the vineyard produced sufficient wine to become drunk (and the Zohar I:97b characterizes that incident as a sin), or (b) if he was going to plant an orchard, he should have planted something of use, such as figs (Midrash
5. Tzadik

Reish Lakish’s opinion of Noach’s stature is primary according to Rashi. Why does Rashi interpret “with Elokim walked Noach” to apparently follows the view of Rabi Yochanan, which is secondary? Rashi explains Noach was not comparable with Avraham Avinu, because Noach’s righteousness was not self-supporting. The implication is that left to his own devices, Noach would not have been righteous in his own generation, and how much more so in the generation of Avraham Avinu.

Actually, the extrapolation of Rashi’s comments to follow the view of Rabi Yochanan in this verse is gratuitous, because there are many different levels of Tzadikim. Based on the Talmud144 and Zohar,145 Likutei Amarim146 describes a semantic differential of the “Tzadik V’Tov Lo” (righteous who prosper) versus the “Tzadik V’Ra Lo” (righteous who suffer). The former are called “Gamor” (complete), and the later are called “Sh’aino Gamor” (incomplete). There are “many levels of Tzadikim”147 between these two extremes.

B’rashis 36:3). According to the Talmud Shabbos 143b-144b and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 320:1, grapes were not grown to consume as food, but rather to squeeze for their juice. (Although the Midrash also suggests Noach should have planted olives, which were also only grown for their juice, its oil cannot be made into an alcoholic beverage.) Noach can still be called righteous, although not perfectly, after the Flood because this incident was not a violation of the Seven Mitzvos of Noach. The child should be reminded this was the only adverse incident in the 350 years Noach lived after the Flood (B’rashis 9:28; the Flood occurred in 2105 B.C.E. and he died in 1755 B.C.E).

(The Ramban’s explanation, at first glance, is contradicted by the Talmud Sanhedrin 108a. Noach delivered his rebuke while people were “clearing the path of their vineyards.” If so, the magnitude of Noach’s mistake of planting a vineyard cannot be embellished with the detail that he was the first one ever to do so. There is no contradiction to the Ramban, however, because: (1) Rashi on the Daf cites the heading to which his commentary applies, and that heading only has the phrase prior to and after the statement that the people were clearing the paths to their vineyards. This means the phrase “while clearing the path of their vineyards” was not in Rashi’s Girsa of the text. (2) The HaGaos HaGra on the Daf states the phrase should be omitted.)

Some M’Forshim list two additional items that, although not violations of the Seven Mitzvos, prevented Noach from being considered perfectly righteous: (1) B’rashis 7:7 states Noach entered the Ark “before the waters” of the Flood, meaning he waited seven days after he was told to enter it (“Come into the Ark,” B’rashis 7:1; “In another seven days I will bring rain,” B’rashis 7:4), and (2) he should not have meekly acquiesced to the advent of the Flood, but should have vigorously defended the generation (Zohar I:67b, 68a) as did Avraham Avinu with the wicked from S’dom and Amorah (B’rashis 18:23-32), and Moshe Rabeinu regarding the incident of the molten calf of gold (Sh’mos 32:4).

144 B’rachos 61b
145 II:117b. The section from II:114b through II:120a is also known as Ra’ya Mehemna.
146 I:1(5a)
147 Examples specifically in comparing Avraham Avinu with Noach are Da’as Sofrim to B’rashis 6:9; Midbar Shur (HaRav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, 1865 C.E. – 1935 C.E.), p. 101-103.
The Tzadik V’Tov Lo’s spiritual anatomy is structurally different from all other human beings, because this person has no Yetzer HaRa.\textsuperscript{148} The Tzadik V’Ra Lo (figuratively – “righteous person who has evil to him”) structurally has a Yetzer HaRa, but it is not a functioning entity, urging no evil in the person’s mental or emotional awareness. (In contrast, the Benoni, the intermediate, is a person who has both a functioning Yetzer HaTov and Yetzer HaRa, but never acts on the prompting of the evil inclination. The Rasha, R”L, is the person who acts on the Yetzer HaRa.)

Noach was a Tzadik V’Ra Lo, meaning he had not eradicated that part of his spiritual anatomy. “Noach was righteous Tamim,” and the Ramban translates Tamim to mean Noach’s deeds (as opposed to his spiritual anatomy) were perfectly righteous. The Midrash\textsuperscript{149} states that he was the first person since Adam’s sin who was not subjected to the Yetzer HaRa. However, Noach was not Gamor (complete), because he had not eradicated the Yetzer HaRa within him. He needed constant support from G-d, lest the evil inclination suddenly awaken and arise within him, for “sin rests at the entrance.”\textsuperscript{150} Thus, Rashi’s explanation, despite illustrating different levels of righteousness between Noach who was incomplete and Avraham Avinu who was complete, nevertheless follows the view of Reish Lakish.

6. Divine Names

What is the specificity of the change in G-dly attributes from the final verse\textsuperscript{151} in Parashos B’rashis which states Noach “found grace in the view of HaShem,” versus the initial verse in Parashos Noach\textsuperscript{152} which states “with Elokim walked Noach”? The Zohar\textsuperscript{153} and the Ramban\textsuperscript{154} point out only the name HaShem is invoked in Parashos B’rashis from where the wickedness of mankind has multiplied through the decision to destroy him. However, the name Elokim is invoked all five times in the first Perek of Parashos Noach, which pertains to the Ark and covenant with Noach. The name reverts back to HaShem when G-d commands Noach to enter into the Ark.

The Ramban\textsuperscript{155} says a full explanation of this matter is a great secret that is not permitted to be written. The Shach\textsuperscript{156} rules, based on the Mishnah,\textsuperscript{157} that such secrets are not even

\textsuperscript{148} Examples are Dovid HaMelech (Tehilim 109:22) who removed it through Ta’anisim, Avraham Avinu who removed it through Chasadim, and Moshe Rabeinu who was born Gamor.

\textsuperscript{149} B’rashis Rabbah 1:61a

\textsuperscript{150} B’rashis 4:7, or as popularly re-stated in the vernacular, “sin crouches at the door.” Moreover, Rava says that “even one who was originally a Tzadik can perhaps revert [to evil], Talmud B’rachos 29a. It is possible to ‘revert’ because the Yetzer HaRa has not been structurally removed from a Tzadik Sh’aino Gamor, who is called a Tzadik V’Ra Lo.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid

\textsuperscript{152} Loc. cit. 6:9

\textsuperscript{153} 1:67a

\textsuperscript{154} To B’rashis 7:1

\textsuperscript{155} Loc. cit. 6:6
permitted to be transmitted orally unless the student is 40 years of age. Nevertheless, the Ba’al Shem Tov\textsuperscript{158} writes in a letter\textsuperscript{159} to his brother-in-law\textsuperscript{160} that during a spiritual ascension\textsuperscript{161} he inquired ‘When will the Master come?’ The Moshiach responded, ‘When your wellsprings shall spread forth from the outside.’ From that time, these secrets have been taught openly by our exalted and saintly Sages, and have been recorded in our sacred books.\textsuperscript{162,163,164,165}

Attributes of G-dliness are revealed in different names.\textsuperscript{166} The name Elokim refers to judgment, as the verse states, “Elohim (Judges) you shall not revile.”\textsuperscript{167} The name HaShem refers to mercy, as the verse states, “HaShem … merciful and gracious.”\textsuperscript{168} Thus, Elokim is invoked when the underlying theme is judgment, and HaShem is invoked when the underlying theme is mercy.

The verses preceding Parashos Noach invoke the name HaShem, but instead of mercy, address the rise of evil and the decision to pronounce judgment. The first verse of Parashos Noach invokes the name Elokim, but instead of judgment, addresses the grace found by Noach. In these cases, the Midrash says “Woe to the wicked who turn the attribute of mercy into judgment,” and “Happy are the righteous who turn the attribute of judgment into mercy.”\textsuperscript{169} The

\textsuperscript{156} To Yorah Deah, 246:6
\textsuperscript{157} Pirke Avos 5:22
\textsuperscript{158} The Ba’al Shem Tov, Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (1698/1700 C.E. – 1760 C. E.), known as the Besht, was the founder of the Chassidic movement, which is based on the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (Ari Zal) (1534 C. E. - 1572 C. E.).
\textsuperscript{159} The letter was first published in Ben Poras Yosef by the Besht’s main disciple, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef HaKohen of Polonoye around 5540 (1780 C. E.), approximately 30 years after it was written. It is currently available in Keser Shem Tov (1981, NY: Kehot Publication Society, p. 3).
\textsuperscript{160} Rabbi Avraham Gershon (of Kitov, or ‘Kitover’)
\textsuperscript{161} To the Supernal Realms (i. e., the Palace of Moshiach). This occurred on Rosh HaShanah, 5507 (1746 C. E.).
\textsuperscript{162} Sha’ar Blat to Sefer Likutei Amarim
\textsuperscript{163} Unsupervised study of Kabbalah by those who have not met the criteria established by Chazal remains prohibited. However, there is no restriction on learning Kabbalistic principles via Chassidus.
\textsuperscript{164} The discussion is limited to a brief understanding of the attributes of G-d’s names Elokim and HaShem. It does not pertain to the parables of Rav Ami and Rav Asi (Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 8:3, 27:4) and Rav Berachayah (Ibid 27:4) to which the Ramban refers, and revealed only in brief in the Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 33:3).
\textsuperscript{165} I am only a “little one… with no knowledge” (D’varim 1:39), and in such esoteric matters “even one who is blind knows when he is undressed” (Rashi to B’rashis 3:7). Nevertheless, a saying of the Lubavitcher Rebbe is “if you know aleph, teach aleph.”
\textsuperscript{166} The names are actually one (D’varim 4:39), and “He and His name are one” (Zohar II:19b). G-d obviously transcends names (Likutei Amarim Sha’ar HaYichud V’HaEmunah chapter 6, p. 80b). The intent is to describe Attributes of G-dliness as they appear to the recipient. See Ramchal’s Da’as Tovunos, “There is to HaKodesh Baruch Hu many epithets, but [they do] not [relate] to [His] essence; rather to [the attributes apparent in His] creations, as it is written there (Ra’y Mehenah Zohar Pinchos 257b).”
\textsuperscript{167} See, e.g., Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 7:2.
\textsuperscript{168} Shir Mos 22:27
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid 34:6
\textsuperscript{169} B’rashis Rabbah 38:3
meaning is the wicked generation fell to the level where even the attribute of mercy resulted in a decree of punishment, but Noach walked with G-d to the level where even the attribute of judgment rose to the level of reward.

The balance of the *Perek* continues to invoke the name *Elokim*, which is appropriate because the topic is the passing of judgment on the evil generation. The beginning of the next *Perek* switches to the name *HaShem*, even though it announces the beginning of the dreaded Flood waters that required Noach to enter the Ark. The reason is because Noach (and his family) will be saved from the Flood, and in gratitude, will offer *Olos* (sacrificial offerings) when disembarking from the Ark. The name *Elokim* is never invoked in the *Torah* regarding sacrificial offerings,\(^{170}\) and hence, the name *HaShem* is used in the verse about entering the Ark that will culminate in Noach offering sacrifices.

\(^{170}\) *Ramban* to *B’rashis* 7:1