בס״ד

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Parshat Noach

ה׳ בחשון ה׳תשפ״ז

Search for Good

In this week's parsha, Hashem could've saved Noach in a plethora of quiet ways. Rashi asks why He didn't, and why He made Noach build the ark. Noach spent 120 years building in plain sight of everyone, so the people of his generation could see what he was doing, ask him why, and maybe change. It was for everyone else.

But we also have to look at how the Torah describes the moment Noach finally enters the ark. It says explicitly in a pasuk that he goes in "because of the waters of the flood," meaning only once the flood had begun. Rashi says this shows Noach had little faith. He believed and didn't believe the flood would actually come, and he wouldn't enter until the water forced him. But this past week, I heard a different way to read this as well. Noach didn't doubt Hashem. He was hoping the people would repent and the flood would no longer be needed.

But his efforts didn't work. The flood came anyway. A hundred and twenty years of trying to inspire change, and the world still ended up with the original punishment. So was it wasted? I don't think so. Noach didn't sit back while the world fell apart. He did something about it, every day. But how can we keep trying with people who don't seem to change?

Rebbe Nachman answers this. He teaches in *Likutei Moharan* that you must judge every individual favorably, and that even for someone who is completely wicked, you must search until you find a small bit of good in him, because in that spot he is not wicked. By finding it and judging him favorably, you tip the scale of judgment in his favor, and you can bring him to repent. Believing people can change isn't naive. It's part of how they change.

So the lesson isn't that effort guarantees a result. It's that we need to do our part while looking for the good in people. Noach never stopped trying, and neither should we.

Shabbat Shalom!