

NO'ACH



2nd of 54 sedras,
2nd of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 230 lines in a Torah, rank: 15

18 Parshiyot; 5 open, 13 closed; rank: 12

153 p'sukim - ranks 4th

Largest in B'reishit - tied w/Vayishlach

1861 words - ranks 11 (6th in B'reishit)

6907 letters - ranks 13 (6th in B'reishit)

Drop in ranking for words and letters is due to No'ach's very short p'sukim.

No'ach ranks 49th in words/pasuk and 51st in letters/pasuk in the Torah. No sedra in B'reishit has shorter p'sukim.

MITZVOT

None of the TARYAG mitzvot are from No'ach, yet there are mitzvot in the sedra, specifically (but not only) references to the Noahide laws. So too is P'RU URVU repeated to No'ach - it is counted as a mitzva from B'reishit, when it was commanded to Adam...



[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya 14 p'sukim - 6:9-22

The sedra of B'reishit began with the glorious account of creation and "went downhill" from there: The exile of Adam and Chava from Gan Eden, Kayin and Hevel, the continuous degeneration through successive generations until G-d's "regret" for having created the world and his "decision" to destroy it.

The only high note of this universal downslide comes at the end of the sedra: "But No'ach found favor in G-d's eyes."

[P> 6:9 (4)] The sedra of No'ach continues this thread and tells us that No'ach was "completely righteous IN HIS TIME".

SDT Rashi presents the divergent opinions as to whether "in his time" is complimentary or derogatory. Was No'ach great EVEN in his very wicked generation, or was he great only by comparison to the generation in which he lived. Although Rashi does not seem to favor one side over the other, it seems obvious that No'ach was not as great as Avraham Avinu. A look at the fifth chapter of Pirkei Avot will reveal a significant difference between No'ach and Avraham. Ten generations from Adam to No'ach and ten from No'ach to Avraham, both to teach us about G-d's long patience. Same. Yet when the first full run of ten generations was up, the Flood came. When the second one was up, the Mishna tells us, that Avraham's merit sustained the whole world.

No'ach's merit seems to have been only enough only to save his own family. On the other hand, there was a significant difference between the generations of No'ach and Avraham that cannot be ignored, and makes comparisons unfair.

The Torah essentially repeats that No'ach had three sons - Sheim, Cham, and Yefet, and that the world was totally corrupt.

[S> 6:13 (48)] Then No'ach is informed by G-d of His plans to destroy the world and is commanded to build an ark, bring into it two of every kind of animal and sufficient food for his family and the animals.

Commentaries point out that No'ach was given ample time to try to influence his generation to mend its ways. He either tried and didn't succeed or didn't try too hard. He did exactly as he was told (implying, and not more).

Think about this...

G-d could have destroyed the world and saved No'ach and family and the pairs of animals with a miraculous snap of His finger. In no time. With no human involvement. He could have, but He didn't. He could have left No'ach on his own, to do the whole job of saving his family and sample pairs of all the animals. He didn't do that either. (It probably would have been humanly impossible for No'ach to have done the whole job on his own.)

What G-d did do is command No'ach to build an ark of a specific size, a three-tiered floating structure, and to gather all the food necessary to feed many, many animals and his family for a year. This, say some commentaries, cannot be done without a heavy dose of miracle, of suspension of the laws of nature. But it wasn't all supernatural. No'ach was part of it. And that is what G-d usually wants when it comes to miracles. We, as humans, relate so much better to that kind of miracle. We need to see some familiar nature inside a miracle, in order to relate properly to it... and we also need to see the miracles inside nature.

Levi - Second Aliya **16 p'sukim - 7:1-16**

G-d tells No'ach and his family to go into the Teiva (ark) and to take with him seven pairs of each kind of kosher animal and bird. No'ach is told that in seven more days it will rain for 40 days and nights during which time all life on earth will be wiped out. No'ach was 600 years old at the time of the Flood. And so it happened.

How many gnus?

(Nothing much; what's gnu with you? - old joke) Seven pairs because the gnu is a kosher animal, or only one pair because the gnu is never brought as a Korban? [The gnu, an east African antelope - a.k.a. wildebeest - comes in two species of different colors, blue and black. Halachically a CHAYA T'HORA, it

is not fit for the Mizbei'ach.] Since some say that the reason for the seven pairs was because of sacrifices, and others say it was to provide kosher food, what's the answer for gnu? Similarly, how many chickens? Sacrifices? No. Food? Yes. So which was it?

Rabbi Zev Leff (Happy 50th anniversary to him & his rebbitzin) explains that B'nei No'ach are permitted to offer sacrifices from ANY kosher animal or bird; No'ach was not restricted to cow, goat, sheep, and two types of doves - the only acceptable Korbanot for Jews. Hence, for either reason, it would seem that there were seven pairs of kudu, giraffe, okapi, gnu, yak, bison, chicken, sparrow, pheasant, quail, etc.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 22 p'sukim - 7:17-8:14

The rains fell and the waters of the deep surged for 40 days and nights, but the Flood remained at its highest level for an additional 150 days. G-d 'remembered' No'ach and all with him in the ark, and the waters began to recede. The ark settled on Mt. Ararat and 40 days later (Remember the first 40 days which represent death of all living things? This time the 40 represents the rebirth of those who survived the Mabul), No'ach opened the "window" of the ark and sent out a raven. Then he sent out a dove, and again, and finally after a full (365-day) year, the earth was ready to receive its new inhabitants.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 15 p'sukim - 8:15-9:7

[S> 8:15 (15)] G-d tells No'ach to leave the ark with his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the animals and birds. No'ach builds an altar and sacrifices upon it from all the kosher species. G-d's "reaction" to No'ach's offerings is that in spite of the basic evil potential of human nature, He will not destroy in the "wholesale fashion" of the Flood (but rather punish on a more restricted and specific basis).

The laws of nature are "adjusted" to provide the world with a never-ceasing cycle of seasons and climatic conditions.

HERE'S A THOUGHT We can see in the account of the Flood and its aftermath, a continuation of creation. It is as if stage 1 of creation was recorded in Breishit and here we have stage 2. In other words, the world came into existence during the 6 days of creation AND during the Flood which took place 10 generations later. Sort of like a rough draft and a further revision. And we, by the way, constantly affect the continuous further dynamic revisions.

G-d blessed and commanded No'ach and his family (and all of mankind) to "be fruitful and multiply".

(Let the point in the use of the two verbs not go by without notice: The ability to have children and raise a family is a mitzva and a wonderful

blessing as well.)

No'ach got permission to eat meat (this was denied to the previous generations), but was warned not to eat from a live animal. Murder and the other Noahide Laws are referred to and/or inferred, at this point. Again, No'ach and family are told to be fruitful and repopulate the world.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 10 p'sukim - 9:8-17

[S> 9:8 (10)] G-d makes a promise to mankind that He will never again destroy the world as He did with the Flood. The rainbow will serve as sign and reminder of this promise.

We acknowledge the significance of a rainbow by reciting a bracha when we see one - "...He Who remembers the Covenant, is faithful to it, and keeps His word." Of the 10 items mentioned in Avot as having been created at the instant between the Six Days of Creation and the first Shabbat, all but the rainbow are supernatural. The rainbow, by virtue of its inclusion on this special list, can be seen as a bridge between the natural and the supernatural. Put differently, we should see G-d's handiwork in all the elements of nature, not just in obvious miracles. "The mouth of the Earth" was a one-time creation to dispose of Korach and his gang. But regular rocks and hills, crags and clefts are no less part of G-d's handiwork.

Some say that a rainbow is a sign that

G-d is angry with the world and would want to destroy it - except He promised not to. On the other hand, Yechezkel describes the Heavenly Throne as being like a rainbow, and the radiance of the Kohen Gadol upon leaving the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur is also likened to a rainbow in the sky. And a rainbow is beautiful, too!

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 44 p'sukim - 9:18-10:32

Second longest Shishi in the Torah

[P> 9:18 (12)] Some time after leaving the ark, No'ach becomes a tiller of the soil and a grape grower. He produces wine and becomes drunk. One of his sons, Cham, behaves immorally with his father in his drunken state; Shem and Yefet behave admirably in the situation, protecting their father's honor and modesty. When No'ach realizes what has happened, he curses Cham and Cham's son Canaan, and blesses Shem and Yafet.

No'ach lives 350 years after the Flood, and dies at the age of 950.

The arithmetic of No'ach's years (600 before + 350 after = 950) seems not to take into account the year of the Flood. There is a good case to be made for not considering the duration of the Flood in calculations of the chronology of the world. We might look at the Flood as a period of "suspended animation" - laws of nature were not in effect; perhaps time as we know it cannot apply to that interval either. The animals in the ark

did not function in their normal ways. No'ach had no sleep during the whole period (if we take statements made as literal). It clearly was not a natural time.

[P> 10:1 (14)] The Torah next outlines the generations that followed No'ach and the nations that came from Sheim, Cham and Yefet.

These are the descendants of No'ach (numbers in brackets count the 70 nations of the world - based on the Living Torah by R' Aryeh Kaplan z"l). We'll call NO'ACH the zero generation. That makes SHEIM, CHAM, and YEFET, the first generation after No'ach.

The counting of the 70 nation-progenitors begin with the children of Sheim, Cham, and Yefet.

The Torah starts the genealogy with Yefet. Generation 2 from Yefet are:

[1] **Gomer**, [2] **Magog**, [3] **Madai**, [4] **Yavan**, [5] **Yuval**, [6] **Meshech**, and [7] **Tiras** (who Rashi says is **Paras**, which partners him nicely with brother Madai [3]).

Third generation from Noach via Yefet's children (from only two of them; no descendants are named from the other five children):

From Gomer: [8] **Ashkenaz**, [9] **Rifat**, and [10] **Togarma**.

From Yavan: [11] **Elisha**, [12] **Tarshish**, [13] **Kitim**, and [14] **Dodanim**.

2nd generation from No'ach via

Cham:

[15] **Kush**, [16] **Mitzrayim**, [17] **Put**, and [18] **K'na'an**.

3rd generation via Cham's children:

From Kush: [19] **S'va**, [20] **Chavila**, [21] **Savta**, [22] **Ra'ma**, [23] **Savt'cha**

Ra'ma had [24] **Sh'va** and [25] **D'dan** (both 4th generation)

Kush also fathered Nimrod, not numbered among the 70.

From Mitzrayim: [26] **Ludim**, [27] **Anamim**, [28] **L'havim**, [29] **Naftuchim**, [30] **Patrusim**, [31] **Kasluchim**, (from either 30 or 31 came [32] **P'lishtim** - according to Rashi, Patrusim and Kasluchim swapped wives a lot and the P'lishtim came from both of them), [33] **Kaftorim** (who might also have come from either Patrusim or Kasluchim or from Mitzrayim - disputed by commentaries).

No one mentioned from Put.

[S> 10:15 (6)] From K'na'an: [34] **Tzidon**, [35] **Cheit**, [36] the **Yevusi**, [37] the **Emori**, [38] the **Girgashi**, [39] the **Chivi**, [40] the **Arki**, [41] the **Sini**, [42] the **Arvadi**, [43] the **Tz'mari**, and [44] the **Chamati**.

So far, **25** from **Yefet**, **19** from **Cham**.

[S> 10:21 (12)] From Sheim:

[45] **Eilam**, [46] **Ashur**,
[47] **Arpachshad**, [48] **Lud**,
[49] **Aram**.

From Aram: [50] **Utz**, [51] **Chul**,
[52] **Geter**, [53] **Mash**.

From Arpachshad came
[54] **Shelach** and from him came
[55] **Eiver**. Eiver is 4th generation.
He had [56] **Peleg** and
[57] **Yaktan** (5th generation).

From Yaktan:

[58] **Almodad**, [59] **Shelef**,
[60] **Chatzarmavet**, [61] **Yerach**,
[62] **Hadoram**, [63] **Uzal**, [64] **Dikla**,
[65] **Oval**, [66] **Avima'el**, [67] **Sh'va**
(same name as 24), [68] **Ofir**,
[69] **Chavila** (same name as 20), and
[70] **Yovav**.

That's **26** from Sheim. **Total 70**.

It should not be lost on us that the birth of the world population is describe as the 70 nations, and the birth of Israel begins (later) with the "70 souls" who went down to Egypt.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 32 p'sukim - 11:1-32

Longest Sh'vi'i in the Torah

[P> 11:1 (9)] The Torah tells us of the attempt to build the "Tower of Babel", the symbol of rebellion against G-d. G-d thwarted the plans, confused the languages of mankind and scattered

the people far and wide.

SDT Commentaries contrast the two sinful generations in this sedra. Dor HaMabul was destroyed because their sins included the destruction of society by total disregard of a person for his fellow. Dor HaPlaga sinned against G-d alone, not against each other. Such a society (albeit warped) can survive; G-d can permit it to continue under these circumstances.

[P> 11:10 (2)] The sedra returns to the lineage of No'ach, this time tracing only through Sheim. We find for each generation, the name of the "main" person, his age when his main, named son was born, how many years he lived after his "main" son was born, and the fact that other sons and daughters were born.

Sheim was 100 when he had Arpachshad (2 yrs after the Flood). He lived a further 500 years (600).

[P> 11:12 (2)] Arpachshad had Shelach at 35. Lived 403 more years (438).

[P> 11:14 (2)] Shelach was 30 when he had Eiver. Then another 403 years (same as his father). (Total: 433).

[P> 11:16 (2)] Eiver was 34 when Peleg was born. He lived another 430 years (464).

[P> 11:18 (2)] Peleg was 30 when R'u was born. He lived another 209 (total, 239).

[P> 11:20 (2)] R'u was 32 when S'rug was born. Plus another 207 years (239).

[P> 11:22 (2)] S'rug was 30 when he had Nachor. He lived another 200 years (230).

[P> 11:24 (2)] Nachor was 29 when Terach was born. He lived 119 more years (148).

[P> 11:26 (7)] Terach was 70 (there's that number again, and also notice how much older Terach was when he had children, compared with all previous generations back to Arpachshad.) Terach had three sons, Avram, Nachor, and Haran. (Remember that No'ach also had three sons.) Haran had Lot. Haran died. Avram married Sarai and Nachor married his niece Milka, Haran's daughter.

The Torah makes a point of telling us that Sarai was barren.

Terach takes his son Avram, his grandson Lot, his daughter-in-law Sarai, they leave Ur Kasdim and head out for the land of K'naan. They make it as far as Charan and settle there. Terach dies in Charan at 205 years of age (first one since No'ach with a recorded age at death).

The sedra thus ends with the stage set for the next major phase of world development - the return to belief in one G-d and the "birth of Judaism" via Avraham Avinu.

Haftara 31 p'sukim Yeshayahu 54:1-55:5

Yeshayahu draws a comparison between the covenant that G-d made with all mankind via No'ach and the promises to the People of Israel concerning their future. Just as G-d promised never to flood the whole Earth again, so too does He promise not to rebuke and punish Israel (in the future). There are phrases in the haftara that make the connection to the sedra all the stronger.

PROBING the PROPHETS

The haftara of Parshat No'ach, a selection taken from 54th and 55th prakim of Yishayahu, is a familiar reading as it includes two of the post-Tish'a b'Av haftarot of consolation, which we read less than two months ago.

Ed. note: Haftara of Ki Teitzei + Haftara of R'ei = Haftara of No'ach. Except that this past year, when R'ei was Rosh Chodesh Elul, the haftara of R'ei was pre-empted by that of Shabbat-Rosh Chodesh and was read instead as a continuation of the Haftara of Ki Teitzei. So in 5778, Haftara of Ki Teitzei = haftara of No'ach. Except for the fact that the haftara of No'ach in 5778 was pre-empted by the haftara of Rosh Chodesh. In other words, in 5778, the haftara of No'ach was read for Ki Teitzei and not No'ach. It would be really cool (to borrow a David Walk word) if that were the case all the time - but it isn't: There are years when we read the same haftara for No'ach and Ki Teitzei.

However, the purpose of these readings are different from each other. Clearly, those read some weeks ago were meant as soothing messages to a mourning and suffering nation. That same reading(s) that we read this week has a different rationale. And it is that rationale that we hope to share in this essay.

Our parsha describes No'ach as ISH TZADIK TAMIM, a wholly righteous man. And yet Chazal point out that the final descriptive word, B'DOROTAV, in his generation, may indicate that his righteousness was measured only in terms of the wickedness of the people of his time. And, in reality, he could not compare to Avraham or other tsadikim of whom we read in the Tanach. The insistence of our scholars to see the negative in No'ach's personality has always disturbed me. Why, after all, do they see this righteous individual in a negative light? Why look for a "blemish" in a person described as "wholly righteous"?

CONT. P. 71 CONT. FROM P. 16

Many point to the fact that he was unable to convince any of his generation to repent from their evil ways - despite the many years he had. Others direct our attention to his post-deluge drunkenness that led his son Cham to be cursed. Rav Moshe Lichtenstein in his work "Netivei Nevu'a" discusses this approach of Chazal and, through his discussion, we may better understand the intent of our holy sages.

The Midrash Rabba (parsha 29) quotes

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana who suggests that No'ach did not really deserve to be saved. It was only that "matza chen b'einei Hashem", he found favor in G-d's eyes. Rav Lichtenstein explains that this quotation was meant to emphasize that the saving of the world from complete destruction through the survival of No'ach and his family was a result of Hashem's compassion for his creations and nothing else. This view, he adds, can be seen in our Rosh HaShana Amida as well when we state: "You also lovingly remembered No'ach and saved him, as a matter of salvation AND COMPASSION when you brought the flood to destroy all flesh." Compassion - not because he was wholly deserving.

Although this approach would seem to defy the meaning of the text, our Rabbis wanted to drive home a very important message to all future generations - and a message that is carried in the words of the haftara as well. Redemption does not come ONLY based on whether we are deserving. Rather, it is brought by G-d's mercy and compassion. Perhaps, as Chazal suggest, No'ach wasn't fully worthy of being the only one to be saved. But "No'ach matza chen b'einei Hashem", he found favor in G-d's eyes.

Yishayahu cries out to the generation to rejoice, "Rani akara...", because G-d will come and redeem you. And yet, throughout the generations, there were surely those who wondered why He would redeem them if they themselves were not worthy of redemption; they were not perfectly righteous. To those individuals the

navi says to look at the "waters of No'ach" - to remember how the, perhaps imperfect righteous man, was redeemed because he found favor in G-d's eyes; saved, because Hashem had a special relationship with him; protected, because the Al-mighty showed him compassion.

And that which was true then, is true now as well. Our Rabbis had no wish to denigrate the tzadik, No'ach. But they did want to drive home the message that redemption will come even if the generation may not be perfect; even when there are sinners; even when there may be those who, as yet, had not understood Hashem's ways.

But redemption will come. It will come because "matza chen b'einei Hashem", the nation finds favor in G-d's eyes and He, therefore, will have mercy and will bring the ge'ula.

Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)