

Noach walked with Hashem. (6:9)

Describing Avraham Avinu's relationship with Hashem, the *Torah* states, "*Walk before me and be wholehearted*" (*Bereishis 17:1*) While Noach walked with Hashem, Avraham walked before Him. Noach needed the support of Hashem to maintain his moral strength, while Avraham, who was morally independent, functioned on a higher level. Noach was not successful in turning back the tide of destruction decreed for the people of his generation. This is enigmatic. Noach spent one hundred and twenty years building an ark. During that time he chastised the people. Indeed, throughout the *Midrashim* we learn that Noach constantly rebuked the people in order to halt their corrupt deeds. Why did he not succeed in inspiring them to repent? What was the key to Avraham's success?

Horav Moshe Schwab, zl, cites *Sforno*, at the end of *Parashas Bereishis*, who explains that although Noach was worthy of saving himself, he did not find sufficient grace before Hashem to spare his family based solely on his own merit. Noach's family was saved only as a result of Hashem's grace. *Sforno* says that three great men did not have the merit to save their families. They were Noach, Daniel, and Iyov. He says that although each of them admonished others, they each also failed to teach their generation the knowledge of Hashem. Avraham reached out to others by teaching them about Hashem. Noach perfected himself, but did not succeed in perfecting others. Hence, his merit was sufficient only for himself.

Sforno teaches us that rebuke can take one of two forms. Noach reproved the people of his generation from a humanistic point of view. He admonished them concerning their interaction between people. He explained that one should not steal and prey upon his neighbor. While he may succeed in over-powering him today, someday he himself might become a target for someone else. Noach's rebuke emanated from a common sense point of view. If I am evil to another person, I will eventually have to answer to others for my actions. He did not emphasize man's higher calling or suggest how one could achieve spiritual/moral perfection. It is not sufficient to simply rebuke; it is essential that one couple the rebuke with advice on how to improve oneself. Noach did not show the people the *derech* Hashem, the path towards self-improvement. He did not teach them about a way of life that contains no stealing or murder; one that refines a person's character traits while it purifies his moral perspective. It is not sufficient to tell someone he is doing something wrong; it is necessary to teach him a way to correct his behavior.