

## These are the offspring of Noach – Noach was a righteous person, perfect in his generations. (6:9)

The term *toldos*, offspring, can also refer to spiritual offspring, the progeny one creates via mentoring them. One's horizon is not limited to his personal circle. True, one's greatest impact is on those within his environs, within his grasp, but, through the medium of teaching Torah, one's reach far extends his grasp. This lesson is taught by *Rashi* in his commentary to *Bamidbar* 3:1, "These are the offspring of Aharon and Moshe." The Torah, however, goes on to list only the sons of Aharon. What happened to the sons of Moshe *Rabbeinu*? *Rashi* quotes the *Talmud Sanhedrin* 19b, from which *Chazal* infer that one who is the spiritual mentor, ie, teaches Torah, to his friend's children is considered as if he had begotten them. A spiritual mentor becomes a spiritual father. Since Moshe taught Torah to the sons of his brother, Aharon *HaKohen*, he became their spiritual father on much the same plane that Aharon was their biological father.

We return to consider Noach, who certainly studied Torah, as noted by *Rashi* (7:2). Noach was a spiritually self-made man, having been his own student. *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, interprets this idea into the *pasuk*, *Eileh Toldos Noach – Noach*; "These are the offspring's of Noach – Noach." Since Noach taught himself Torah, his offspring was actually himself! Noach begot Noach. Perhaps we can extend this idea a bit further by suggesting that when one studies Torah, he is recreating himself. Every moment of Torah learning is a moment of spiritual transformation.

*Rav Karlinstein* quotes the *Chasam Sofer*, who offers the following insightful explanation of "Noach – Noach." During the last fifty-eight years of Noach's life, he merited to live together with Avraham *Avinu*. It was a period of unparalleled spiritual ascendance, to see and be inspired by the Patriarch of our People. It was those fifty-eight years which earned Noach the appellation *tzaddik tamim*, righteous/perfect. Avraham was called *tamim* by Hashem. Being in his presence allowed this "perfection" to be transmitted to Noach. Thus, *Eileh toldos Noach – Noach*. The prime years of Noach were "Noach" – his last fifty-eight years (*gematria*, numerical equivalent, of Noach is 58), during which he was inspired by – and absorbed – the teachings of Avraham.