

So Noach went forth. (8:18)

The flood waters receded, and Hashem instructed Noach to leave the Ark. *Chazal* (*Zohar* 1:256) teach that when Noach exited the *Teivah*, Ark, and beheld the devastating destruction of humanity, he began to weep uncontrollably. He said to Hashem: “*Ribono Shel Olam*, You are called *Rachum*, Merciful; thus, You should have been merciful on Your creations.” Hashem replied, “Now you come with complaints. Why did you not issue your defense for humanity when I told you My plans to send a flood that would destroy the world? You made an Ark to save yourself and your family. Why did it not enter your mind (then) to appeal on their behalf? Now, when the world was destroyed (and you were spared), you offer your protest.”

Chacham einov b'rosho, “A wise man – his eyes are in his head.” This means he thinks when he sees. His cognitive insight penetrates through whatever ambiguities might lie before him and guides him concerning the proper course of action. *Horav Dov Schwartzman, zl*, observes that one often sees his sin, but fails to consider the collateral damage that results from his indiscretion. Hashem intimated to Noach: “I informed you of My impending punishment. A world that has no moral compass cannot continue to exist. You accepted the decree and sought refuge for yourself. You should have prayed on their behalf. You did not. That is cruel!”

Veritably, we cry after the tragedy has occurred. Why do we wait until it is a *fait accompli* and the devastation has taken place – before we grieve and pray? We should pray when there is still opportunity to prevent the decree from achieving fruition – when our prayer can, and will, make a difference.

In his commentary to the *parshah* (9:20), *Sforno* explains the error in Noach's actions post-Flood. *Vayachel Noach ish ha'adamah*, “And Noach, the man of the earth, began.” He writes: Noach began with an unsuitable project: the planting of a vineyard, which resulted in his drinking of the wine, which under normal circumstances would appear innocuous; yet, a small fault at the beginning led to far more serious consequences. A similar occurrence took place in Shittim, where the people acted immorally with the Midyanite women. This led to full scale idolatry.

Sforno offers a similar approach toward understanding the words, *Vayeired Hashem liros*, “And Hashem came down to see” (11:5). He explains that the idiom, “descending to see,” is employed with regard to Hashem when the action of the sinner does not in and of itself merit punishment, but will inevitably lead to more serious deterioration, similar to the actions of the *ben sorer u'moreh*, wayward and rebellious son. Hashem sees the ultimate consequences of a present act or condition. In the case of the Tower of Babel, He examined the act and determined the outcome. As a result of this Heavenly insight, Hashem dispersed the people, thereby preventing a greater sin from occurring.

Viewing a situation cognitively is imperative – both from its possible negative consequence and also from a positive perspective, which can be encouraging and motivate one to strive higher and

work harder for a favorable outcome. First and foremost, however, one must know/realize that whatever success or failure he has is predicated on an objective self-view of his strengths and weaknesses. Rav Schwartzman interprets the opening words of our *parshah*: *Eileh toldos Noach – Noach (ish tzaddik)*. These are the offspring of Noach – Noach. Every person should be acutely aware that the first fruits of his endeavor is himself. The first creation, offspring, product of Noach, is Noach. Our goal is to create ourselves in such a manner that we act *b'tzalmo*, in His image, *kidmuso*, in His likeness. A visionary is one who visualizes a completed product when all he has before him is the rough materials. Prior to presenting a vision of the future, one must first perfect the present: himself. One can hardly plan for tomorrow if his “today” hangs in the balance.