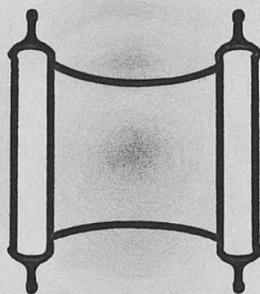


בס"ד

Reb Meir of Premishlan

Divrie Meir

Parshas Noach



Introduction

In this Maamer, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan illuminates one of the most discussed verses in the Torah: “These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a righteous and perfect man in his generations.” While Rashi brings two contrasting interpretations—some viewing it as praise and others as criticism—Rabbi Meir uncovers a moral teaching that transcends historical debate. He reveals that this very tension exposes a timeless truth about human speech, judgment, and holiness: that no matter how elevated a person may be, the impulse to criticize and speak negatively can persist. By turning this Midrashic paradox into a mirror for our own behavior, Rabbi Meir reframes the verse as a lesson in guarding the tongue and recognizing the folly of slander.

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan
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Parshas Noach

אַלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ נֹחַ ו, ט

These are the generations of Noach: Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; with God, Noach walked (Bereishis 6:9)

“These are the generations of Noach: Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations.” And Rashi, of blessed memory, explained — and this is in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a) — there are some of our Sages who interpret it to his praise: all the more so that if he had been in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. And there are some who interpret it to his discredit: according to his generation he was righteous, and so forth.

אַלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו. וּפֶרֶשׁ רַשִׁי ו"ל וְהוּא בְּגִמְרָא סְנֵהֲדָרִין ק"ח י"ש מִרְבוּתֵינוּ דּוֹרָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ לְשִׁבְחָה, כָּל שָׁפָן שָׂאֵלוּ הָיָה בְּדוֹר צַדִּיקִים הָיָה צַדִּיק יוֹתֵר, וְיֵשׁ שְׂדוּרָשִׁים אוֹתוֹ לְגַנְאִי, לְפִי דוֹרוֹ הָיָה צַדִּיק וְכו'.

And the well-known difficulty is: if it is possible to interpret it to his praise, why should we interpret it to his discredit? And also, how is it possible to interpret it to his discredit when the holy Torah testifies about him, “Noach was a righteous man, perfect” and so forth?

וְהַקְשָׁא מִפְּרָסְמַת אִם יְכוּלִין לְדָרֵשׁ לְשִׁבְחָה לָּהּ לֹן לְדָרֵשׁ לְגַנְאִי, וְגַם אִיךָ אֶפְשָׁר לְדָרֵשׁ לְגַנְאִי כְּשֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הַקְדוּשָׁה מַעֲיֵדָה עָלָיו “נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה” וְכו'.

And in the name of the holy Rav, our teacher, Rabbi Meir of Premishlan — may his merit protect us — I saw an explanation of the aforementioned words of Rashi, that he came to teach that it is impossible to close the mouths of those who speak lashon hara and gossip, God save us. Even about the great ones of the generation they speak slander.

וּמִשְׁמֵה דְּהַרְבַּ הַקְדוּשׁ מוֹרְנוּ הַרְבֵּי רַבִּי מֵאִיר מִפְּרִמִּישְׁלָאן זְכוּתוֹ יִגְן עָלֵינוּ רְאִיתִי לְפָרֵשׁ דְּבָרֵי רַשִׁי ו"ל הַנִּזְכָּר, שֶׁבָּא לְהוֹרוֹת שְׂאֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְסַגּוֹר הַפִּיּוֹת הַמְדַּבְּרִים לְשׁוֹן הָרַע וּרְכִילוֹת רַחֲמָנָא לְצִלָּן, אַף עַל גְּדוּלַּי הַדּוֹר מְדַבְּרִים סָרָה.

Who is greater in stature than one about whom the holy Torah itself testified, “Noach was a righteous man, perfect” — and nevertheless there are those who interpret it to his discredit. If so, it is no novelty that in these generations there are lowly people who speak such things.

מִי לָנוּ גְּדוֹל מִכֵּן שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הַקְדוּשָׁה הַעֲיֵדָה עָלָיו “נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה”, עִם כָּל זֹאת יֵשׁ מִי שְׂדוּרָשִׁין לְגַנְאִי, אִם כֵּן אֵין חֲדוּשׁ שְׂבָדוּרוֹת אֵלּוּ נִמְצְאִים אִינְשֵׁי דְלָא מַעֲלֵי שְׂמַדְבָּרִים דְּבָרִים כְּאֵלּוּ

[NOTE Summary

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan offers a penetrating reading of Rashi’s explanation on “Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations.” While the Sages differ whether this phrase is praise or criticism, Rabbi Meir highlights a deeper lesson: there will always be people who speak negatively, even about the greatest tzaddikim. If Noach — about whom the Torah itself testifies to his righteousness — could still be spoken of disparagingly, it is no surprise that in later generations people find fault in others. This teaches us not to be

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shocked or overly shaken by gossip or slander, for it is a timeless reality that even the holiest are not spared from baseless criticism.

Practical Takeaway

When facing gossip, criticism, or unfair judgment, remember that such words often say more about the speaker than the subject. Even the most righteous, pure-hearted individuals were targets of negativity. Rather than wasting energy defending against every remark, focus on living with integrity before God and fulfilling your mission. Let your deeds speak louder than words.

Chassidic Story

Once, a man came to Rabbi Meir of Premishlan deeply hurt by rumors being spread about him. Rabbi Meir listened quietly, then pointed outside to the town's tall lamppost. "Do you see that post?" he asked. "It stands in the middle of the road. Dogs bark at it every day, yet it never barks back. It simply stands tall and shines its light at night. That is your work. Let them bark — you keep shining." The man understood: his role was not to silence every critic, but to continue to bring light, regardless of the noise around him.

Chassidic Story

Once, a villager came to Rabbi Meir of Premishlan deeply hurt by false rumors being spread about him. "Rebbe," he said, "they are saying terrible things—lies that shame me before the town. What should I do?" Rabbi Meir smiled gently. "Do you know what they said about Noah?" he asked. "The Torah itself calls him righteous and perfect, yet still people found fault with him. If the Torah's words could not silence them, should we expect better? Live uprightly, and let the wind carry their words away." The man left uplifted, realizing that his worth was determined not by others' words but by the truth of his own deeds.

END NOTE]