HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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The Days or the Waters of Noach?

PARSHAT NOACH | YESHAYAHU 54:1–55:5

כִּי־מֵי נֹחַ זֹאת לִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מֵעֲבֹר מֵי־נֹחַ עוֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ כֵּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקְצֹף עָלַיִךְ וּמִגְּעַר־בָּךְ

For this to Me is like the waters of Noah: As I swore that the waters of Noah nevermore would flood the earth, so I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.

Does this week's haftorah speak of the *waters* of Noach or the *days* of Noach? Both the Radak and the Abarbanel note a difference between texts. Some have two words, *ki mei Noach*, referring to the waters. Others have one word, *kimei Noach*, referring to the days.

The Radak explains that either reading brings us to the same promise. Just as Hashem made a covenant that the flood would never return to destroy the earth, He promises that after the final redemption, the Jewish people will not again experience exile.

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The Abarbanel draws an additional idea from the reading "the days of Noach." He asks us to consider what became of the few who survived. Noach and his family emerged from the *teivah* into a devastated world. From that one family, the world was populated anew. So, too, the remnant of the Jewish people would return, grow, and fill the land.

These explanations help us understand the call that opens our haftorah: "Enlarge the place of your tent … do not hold back." Yerushalayim is asked to prepare for the return of her children even while she feels their absence. Hashem's covenant assures her that there is a future, and the story of Noach reminds her how much can grow from a small beginning.

When we look at the streets of Yerushalayim today, at the children walking to school and the families making their homes there, these words take on new meaning before our eyes. As we continue to daven for the complete Geulah, we can pause to appreciate the life filling streets that once stood empty — and look forward to the children who have yet to come home. ■

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