

Hashem brings a deluge to the world.

וַיָּבֹא נֹחַ זָבָנוּ וְאֶשְׁתָּו וְנִשְׁרִידְבָּגְיוּ אֶתְוֹ אֶל-הַתְּבָהָה מִפְנֵי מֵי הַמְּבוֹל:

“And Noach, along with this his children and his wife that were with him, entered the teiva prior to the waters of the deluge.” (Bereishis 7:7).

How long did the deluge last? When did it start? Where did the water come from?

The waters were on the earth for one hundred and fifty days. (Ibid 7:24). When does this timeline commence? There was a seven-day warning (ibid 7:4) and then there was a downpour for forty days and forty nights (7:12). Even though the rains ceased, the waters continued to swell for another one hundred and ten days. That would make seven days of warning and then forty days of flooding downpour and another one hundred and ten days of waters rising. If the waters continued to rise then where did those waters come from?

The timeline is a bit more complex. Before Noach turned six hundred, Hashem told Noach to build a teiva. (Ibid 6:14). He was five hundred ninety-nine when the deluge came. (Ibid 7:11). Noach built the teiva for an unspecified number of years. The Torah says, “And Hashem said, ‘My breath shall not continue to judge man forever, because he is made of flesh. And it will be his days shall be one hundred and twenty.’” (Ibid 6:3). The Midrash learns from this pasuk that Hashem fixed a time of one hundred and twenty years before exacting punishment. (Avos DeRabbi Nasan 32). The Midrash further expands on this idea and says that Noach built the teiva for one hundred and twenty years. (Bereishis Rabbah 30). This gave the generation ample time to repent. Even with this interpretation, the pausk simply means that Hashem no longer wanted such long life for man on earth. At first, man was to be immortal. The Torah says, “And they were both intelligent beings, the man and his wife, and they would not wither away.” (Ibid 2:25). After the incident in the Garden, Hashem cursed man and took away that immortality. “For you are dust and to the dust shall you return.” (Ibid 3:19). If they were not immortal already, returning to the dust would not be a curse.

Hashem was upset at Noach’s generation due to their increasing sins. He could not continue to judge them forever, for so many centuries, delaying judgment with mercy. They would not last that long in Hashem’s balance of judgment. Therefore, Hashem, in further mercy reduced their years to one hundred and twenty.

Regardless of how many years Noach worked on the teiva, he completed it in his six hundredth year. Hashem then commanded that Noach enter the teiva with his household. (Ibid 7:1). He was then also commanded to take seven pairs of clean animals and two [pairs?] of unclean animals. (Ibid 7:2). (The two is unclear. Just like the pasuk said seven pairs, the two could mean pairs so that it was two pairs of each unclean animal.

This is leant further credence later when the Torah says “two, two of each” (ibid 7:9) making it clear it was two pairs). He was also to take seven pairs of flying creatures. (Ibid 7:3). The Torah’s נִיּוֹת does not mean bird, but flying creature. We know this because it says, “to keep seed alive on all the earth.” (Ibid). The main “oif” that keeps plant-life alive is the bee. Bees are included in flying creatures.

“Because for an additional seven days I will make it rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights.” (Ibid 7:4). This means it commenced raining but the first seven days of the rain were not part of the “deluge.” Noach did all that Hashem commanded. (Ibid 7:5). Prior to any rain he took the animals into the teiva and he moved into it with his family. If so, why does the Torah then say “Noach.... entered the teiva because of the waters of the deluge?” (Ibid 7:7). That seems to imply that it was only the waters of the deluge that made him enter the Teiva. (Midrash Bereishis Rabbah 32). The word נִפְנִים means in front of or earlier. It was not because of. Therefore, prior to the waters of the flood is when Noach entered. This is the “On that same day” that is stated later. (Ibid 7:13). After he entered and took the animals in (ibid 7:7-9) “and it was the seven [additional] days, and then the deluge waters were on the earth.” (Ibid 7:10). The pasuk differentiates between the seven days of rain and then the deluge rain of forty days and forty nights.

Where did the water come from? “On that day, all the springs of the great deep were pierced, and the floodgates of the sky opened up.” (Ibid 7:11). The waters that came down were not from the clouds, only. That would not be able to fill up and flood the earth, or even part of the world. Water settles to the lowest levels. The water on earth is finite. Rain comes from the oceans in the form of clouds. Even if all the oceans emptied into clouds and rained on the world, the water would just trickle back down and fill up the oceans. It would be a net zero gain. Yet, after the rain stopped the water continued to rise. The Torah does not use any form of “walls of water” like it does by the splitting of the Yam Suf. The waters, then, came from elsewhere.

“It shall be an expanse within the waters. And it was that there was a separation between the waters and waters.” (Ibid 1:6). There were waters above this expanse and below it. (Ibid 1:7). The expanse was called “the heavens.” (Ibid 1:7). Prior to the deluge, there was a thick layer of water that encircled the earth. While these pesukim refer to the creation of the entire universe, the concept that the sky is a separation between waters above and below were put into creation. It is logical that when Hashem formed our planet on Day 4, it was created with this same division of waters. It is these waters that fell when “the sky opened up.” Also, there were underground springs – lots of water “in the deep” under the Earth’s crust. These came up flooding from below. Even after the forty days expired they continued to rise up with pressure and add to the deluge, raising the levels for another one hundred and ten days.

Hashem is the Lord of Mercy and Grace, and long-lasting consideration. Even when mankind deserves punishment, He finds ways to delay it and to reconsider. Hashem always looks for the merit, not the excuse to punish. One should not go through life thinking that Hashem is looking for an excuse to punish. Contrarily, Hashem wants only to provide mercy and kindness and to forgive and reward.