

In Parshat Noach (6:14), Noach is commanded to build an ark in order to save him and his family from the flood meant to punish mankind for their sins. It makes sense that if Noach is worthy of being saved that Hashem could prevent him from dying along with humanity, but why an ark? And why does Noach need to build it, instead of being saved by Hashem in a supernatural way at the time the flood hits?

Rashi on this pasuk explains that during the time span of 120 years that Noach would build the ark, the idea would be that people would ask Noach why he is building it. In response, Noach would say that Hashem is going to bring a flood on the world, and that would hopefully cause people to repent.

This Rashi is simple on the surface, but what is it really trying to teach us? Why did Hashem give the world such a long time period to learn that they needed to do Teshuva? Moreover, why didn't it work? If I were informed that my sinning ways were causing destruction, I would at least try to do some introspection and think about what I could do to better the situation.

I think that this Rashi comes to teach us an eternal message for each generation. Did it really matter that Noach's generation ignored the signs? I think the Torah is reminding us not to overlook the solutions that are right in front of us but that are the hardest to notice. How often do we bypass a simple answer to try to do more than necessary? How common is it for us to ask where our glasses are when they are sitting right there on our noses? When there are things right in front of us, it is difficult to see their power. We think we need to look elsewhere and search for something better, but if we would just use the tools at hand, the job would get done as needed.

The people of Noach's generation made a fatal mistake. They would not even take one step towards thinking about what they could be doing wrong. Forget repenting, they would not even ask Noach what he was building. Noach was not hiding the ark for himself; it was a symbol of redemption that the generation simply did not want to notice. We need to take this lesson into account with everything we do and every challenge we face. This is how we can close the floodgates.

Good Shabbos from Poland.