



Parashat Noach

Who Was Noach's Wife?

Dear Rebbetzin,

The Torah tells us about the righteousness of Noach, who survived the flood, but what about his wife? Wouldn't she have had to be a woman with extraordinary emunah, patience, and love for her husband, in order to go along with a task that was preposterous, to say the least? Although Noach was the head of the family, how would he have survived without the support of his wife? Therefore, I wonder why the Torah doesn't tell us anything about Noach's wife? She doesn't even have a name.

Nami Nochman (Name changed)

Dear Nami,

You are asking an excellent question. Many righteous women are rather hidden in the Torah. This is because women represent the internal realm, as I explained concerning the creation of Chava. We need to go deeper into the Midrash and commentaries in order to glean information about many righteous women, including Noach's wife. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to look into the sources and share what I found.

Na'amah –Noach's Hidden Wife

The way of the Torah is to write briefly about people who have little significance, and go into length describing righteous individuals who shaped history. In this vein, the section dealing with the ten generations from Adam to Noach writes briefly that "So and so begat so and so;" but when Scripture comes to Noach, descended from Shes, the third son of Adam it dwells on him at length. Likewise, it reports the ten generations from Noach to Avraham in brief; but when it reaches Avraham, it deals with him fully. There is one exception to this general rule in the section describing Lemech, the descendant of Cain, where it mentions not only his two wives, and sons, but moreover his daughter:

ספר בראשית פרק ד (כב) וְצִלָּה גַם הוּא יִלְדָה אֶת תּוּבַל קַיִן לִטֵּשׁ כָּל חֲרָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרָזָל וְאַחֹת תּוּבַל קַיִן נְעֻמָּה:
 "Tzilah also gave birth to Tuval Cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron; but the sister of Tubal-Cain was Na'amah" (*Bereishit* 4:22).

If all the descendants of Cain perished in the flood why do we need to know their names?

Unless, we say that Na'amah was Noach's wife there is no reason for Scripture to mention her name. Thus Rashi, based on the Midrash, states that Na'amah was the wife of Noach. This explains why the descendants of Cain, and in particular, Lemech, are described at length. The identification of Na'amah, a descendant of Cain, as the wife of Noach, is like a second Chava – the mother of all life. Therefore, we, her descendants must learn whom she was and why she deserved to be saved from the curse of the flood. The question is why her name is not mentioned directly in *Parashat Noach*? Perhaps, she remains anonymous without identity because the reason she was saved from the flood was solely that she was "a part of the body" of Noach?

Na'amah Whose Deeds were Pleasing

In the Torah, women are responsible for their own actions. Just having a righteous husband is not enough to save them. Chava was held responsible for eating from the Tree. Lot's wife perished although Lot was saved. Likewise, Na'amah had to have her own merit in order to be saved from the flood. Her name indicates that she deserved to survive. The Midrash explains that Noach's wife indeed was a righteous woman who deserved to be saved in her own right:

מדרש רבה בראשית - פרשה כג פסקה ג

...קין הרג ולא היה לו במה להרוג אבל זה לוטש כל חורש נחושת וברזל ואחות תובל קין נעמה א"ר אבא בר כהנא נעמה אשתו של נח היתה למה היו קורין אותה נעמה שהיו מעשיה נעימים...

"Cain killed, but he didn't have what to kill with. Thus this one [Tubal Cain] was the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron. But the sister of Tuval Cain was Na'amah." Rabbi Abba bar Kahanah said: Na'amah was the wife of Noach, and why was she called Na'amah (pleasant one)? Since her deeds were pleasing..." (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 23:3).

According to Ramban, Na'amah is mentioned because she was famous for being a *tzaddeket* (righteous woman) in those generations. Certainly much emunah, courage and endurance was needed in order to partner with Noach in surviving the flood.

Na'amah – Cain's Remnant in the World

Although all the rest of Cain's descendants perished in the flood, Cain had a continuation in the world through Na'amah., Noach's wife is mentioned five times in the flood story (*Bereishit* 6:18, 7:7, 7:13, 8:16, 8:18) without revealing her name, perhaps because the mention of her family background would not be complimentary. Thus, she remains without personal identity in the story of Noach. Yet, the fact that Na'amah was saved makes clear that not all the descendants of Cain were without hope of redemption. For this reason Cain received Divine Revelation. "From that which was good in Cain the world was established, through this woman, and he had the privilege of joining in the survival of the world with the seed of Seth, who were the purpose of creation" (*Emek Davar, Bereishit* 4:32); (Yona Bar Maoz). From Na'amah, we learn the power of teshuvah. It was only through Cain's teshuvah (*Tzror HaMor, Devarim* 30:11), that he merited to have Na'amah – the mother of the entire future world descending from him (*Pri Tzaddik, Shabbat Teshuvah* 8).

Na'amah – Prompting Noach to Resist His Evil Generation

Although she was the sister of the evil Tubal Cain, who produced weapons for murder, Na'amah didn't learn from him, but remained Na'amah – whose deeds were pleasant. Having the backbone to remain righteous among the wicked who would ultimately be obliterated, was a virtue that later proved vital to become part of the only righteous family in the entire generation. "Noach was a perfectly righteous man in his generation" (*Bereishit* 6:9). There is an opinion that Noach was even greater than Avraham, because his generation was more wicked, and it is a great challenge to withstand such evil influence. This may be compared to a bottle of perfume placed between graves. How much sweeter would its fragrance be had it not been placed there (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 30:9). It is possible that Noach's greatness was in the merit of his wife, who had learned to withstand the evil influence of her brother. Perhaps it was Na'amah that taught her husband how to remain strong and resist the influence of his evil environment.