

# PERCEPTIONS - NOACH

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

God saw that the world was corrupt, and that all flesh across the land had perverted its ways. God said to Noach, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, since the land is filled with violence. I will annihilate them from the land." (Bereishis 6:12-13)

And, so He did, each and every last descendant of Kayin, just as God had foretold, and just as Noach had warned. A lot of good that did, though, because they mocked him until the very end, until the massive door of the ark miraculously closed, and the water became deep enough to make it clear to all those on the outside that yes, the Flood was, in fact, becoming reality.

One can only imagine the tremendous regret they must have felt as the Flood waters swallowed them up, while at the same time lifting Noach and his family to safety above their heads. Unfortunately, it is a lesson that few have taken to heart since then as well, for the pattern has been repeated several times. First the prototype:

Onlooker: Hey, Noach! Whatcha buildin' up here high in the mountains? Noach: It's an ark. God told me to build it because He plans to bring a Flood to wipe all of you away if you don't repent soon! Onlooker turned Mocker: Riggggght ... and French Fries are good for your health, right?

Now for a little déjà vu:

Pharaoh: Who sent you again?

Moshe: God, and if you don't let His people go, He's going to destroy all of Egypt with terrible plagues!

Pharaoh: Really? Oh, I can't wait! When does all the excitement begin? Jewish people: What did you say God said again?

Yechezkel: If you don't do teshuvah, He's going to destroy the Temple and exile all of you!

People: Why do you make up such crazy prophecies? God would never destroy His temple. You're just a doomsday sayer ...

Jewish people: Ah, Mordechai, you always worry too much. If we don't go, what will the king say?

Mordechai: I'm telling you, don't go to the king's feast! It can only bring about bad for our people ...

People: Yeah, and whose going to turn on us?

The examples are many, and though the warnings have not always been with words and from people, they have been warnings nonetheless. And, how many times have we heeded the warnings and avoided the foretold destruction?

Too few to have been recorded historically, if they existed at all. Begin: Iraq is a threat to the free world, and one day you will thank us for our daring mission to blow up the reactor!

VP George Bush: You just jeopardized our relationship with Saddam Hussein! We'll teach you a lesson you'll never forget ...

History: You'll learn one the hard way you'll never forget!

Israel: Iran is about to become nuclear, and it will be a problem for everyone.

Let's deal with it now while we can.

America: Nahhhh, it will take a long time before they become nuclear, and dangerous.

Iran: We're almost there, and we can't wait to blow up the whole world, right after we bomb Israel.

Anti-Disengagement: Don't give them Gush Katif. They'll just destroy the place and use it as a base for terrorism.

Sharon and Leftists: Don't be so childish. They'll settle it and you'll see there'll be peace.

AD: Well, it didn't take long of Hamas to destroy Gush Katif and turn it into a base for terrorism, did it?

Yeah, it's the same old story, over-and-over-again. Warnings of impending doom, lots of cognitive dissonance, fulfillment of bad prophecy, and the cycle starts anew. What is it about mankind, and in particular, the Jewish people, that blocks us from owning up to the truth, and fixing history while it is still safe to do so? Is it something missing from our diet?

And, here we go again.

Concerned Jew: Aren't you worried about your safety living in America?

American Jew: Are you kidding? This is the safest place to be a Jew!

CJ: So was Europe, once. That's why, given the choice between remaining in danger in Europe in the 1930s, or fleeing to America, many chose to take their chances in Europe.

AJ: I understand. But that was Europe in the 1930s. This is America in 2008!

CJ: But, whenever the financial world collapses, the Jews get blamed, and anti-Semitism returns.

AJ: I know it has in the past ... but it won't happen this time. The average American is too civilized to be so anti-Semitic.

CJ: I see. And how do you know for sure? Don't you see how quickly situations change, and how fast

gentiles have turned on the Jews before? Don't you see how everything else we thought wouldn't happen again has already occurred?

AJ: Some of it, yes. But, that doesn't mean that the rest of it will go that way ...

CJ: But do you admit that it is possible?

AJ: I suppose it is always possible ... but I repeat, unlikely.

CJ: But the unlikely has already started to occur. That's why there is such shock throughout the financial community, as past chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, just testified ...

AJ: Right, so what is your point?

CJ: My point is this: Dovid HaMelech wrote, "This is from God, that which is wondrous in our eyes" (Tehillim 118:23). This means that when the unlikely happens, it is because God is making it happen, which means that even more of the unlikely is likely to happen. That's why we're always caught by surprise when it does.

What would you answer to that? Would you buy it, or at least give it some serious consideration, if you were an American Jew, or a Canadian Jew, or a British Jew, etc., and you have invested so much of your life building a world in the Diaspora? Would you start to become concerned about the direction of world events today, and wonder if they really spell the end of what has been, until recently, a very comfortable and profitable exile?

And, if not, why not? What would be your basis of your denial? Fact? Logic? Intuition? Hope? Whatever it is, ask yourself the following question: If I were writing a book today, paid by a benefactor to devise a credible plot of how life in America could fall apart for the Jew, and even become dangerous, what would I write? What scenario would I devise? You'll probably be surprised how easy it is for you to devise the scenario. You'll probably be shocked at how much history has already provided the backdrop for it to come true, to such an extent that, if you're not careful, you might find yourself becoming somewhat paranoid about living outside of Eretz Yisroel. A little imagination can go a long way for prepping a person for what might actually be reality, a distant one that is far closer than we might like to believe.

The people of Noach's generation never lived to tell. Pharaoh did, and he later became the king of Nineveh. That's why when Yonah came and warned of imminent doom, the people of Nineveh responded with teshuvah, saving their city and their lives. Pharaoh had told them, "Trust me ... when God threatens, it's worth listening."

Ironically, it is one of the few cases in history when such a story had a happy ending. The question now is, how will history write ours? We're at that critical point in time when perception and choice make a huge difference.

We're at that moment of truth that we, as individuals and as a people, must decide what meaning

current events hold in terms of the ultimate goals of the Jewish people and of Creation, and respond accordingly. Negative prophecies don't have to come true.

But only if we do what is necessary to turn them into positive ones. Rebi Alexandri said: Rebi Yehoshua ben Levi raised the following contradiction:

It says, "Behold like the clouds of Heaven came one like the son of man" (Daniel 7:13). It is also written, "Lowly and riding upon a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). If they merit it, he will come with the clouds of Heaven, but if they do not merit it, he will come upon a donkey. (Sanhedrin 98a)

As to how to do it, that is, turn history into the fulfillment of a positive prophecy, that is the subject of an entire book called, "Geulah b'Rachamim," available online at [thirtysix.org](http://thirtysix.org). This is not a plug for a book.

It is a plug for a happy ending to Jewish history.

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