

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Noach

3 Cheshvan, 5782 – October 9, 2021

Compiled from the works of  
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Parshas Noach**

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**Rashi in His Own Words**

בראשית ו', ט"ז: צהר | תעשה לתבה ואל-אמה תכלנה מלמעלה ופתח התבה בצדה תשים תחתים שנים ושליש תעשה:  
רש"י ד"ה צהר: יש אומרים חלון, ויש אומרים אבן טובה המאירה להם:

**Bereishis 6:16:** You shall make a Tzohar for the ark, and to a cubit, you shall finish it to the to. The entrance of the ark you shall place in its side. You shall make it with bottom (compartments), second story (compartments), and third story (compartments).

**Rashi Heading – Tzohar:** Some say that it was a window, and some say that it was a precious stone which gave them light.

**Synopsis**

In this week's Torah portion, Noach, Hashem decreed that He would wipe out the world with a flood. He would only save Noach and his family, who were righteous, and at least two of each species of animal. From these, Hashem would repopulate the earth. They would all be saved by means of Hashem's command to Noach to<sup>1</sup> "make for yourself a ship of gopher wood."

Among Hashem's instructions to Noach were<sup>2</sup> "you shall make a 'Tzohar' for the ark ..." Rashi cites the word "Tzohar" and explains it as follows. "Some say that it was a window, and some say that it was a precious stone which gave them light." In other words, Rashi is explaining that the word "Tzohar – צהר" is related to the word "Tzohorayim - צהרים," connotating light. Rashi tells us that according to one opinion the source of the light on the ship was a window, and according to another, it was a precious stone.

Obviously, the dimensions of this ship that would house Noach and his entire family, together with an assortment of each type of animal, their supplies and waste had to be enormous. We know exactly how large it was because the Torah details its specific measurements. The Torah also tells us that this ship was divided into separate rooms on three different floors. Rashi specifies that the source of light would be either a window or a gem (in the singular). How could one single source of light, no matter how bright, supply enough illumination for such a large vessel?

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 6:14.  
2. *Ibid.* 6:16.

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This can be explained from the fact, that despite the many detailed instructions which Hashem gave Noach regarding the building of the ark, He did not specify every detail. For example, after the flood, the Torah tells us that<sup>3</sup> “it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, that the waters dried up from upon the earth, and Noach removed the covering of the ark, and he saw, and behold, the surface of the ground had dried up.” Yet, we do not find that Noach was told to make a covering for the ark.

When Hashem told Noach<sup>4</sup> “Make for yourself a ship of gopher wood,” He was commanding him to build everything which would be needed for the functionality of the ark. Hashem specified only those things which Noach would not have understood on his own. Obviously, such a large vessel would need lighting, which Noach included in the structure which he built. Hashem’s specific command to *make* a Tzohar referred to an additional source of light.

### Rashi’s Explanation

This week’s Torah portion, Noach, tells of the great flood, which Hashem brought upon the earth to destroy it. The population of the world was (almost completely) wiped out. Hashem commanded Noach, who was a Tzaddik, to build a ship. This ship would save him, his wife, his three sons, their wives and at least two of each species of animal. The desolate world would be re-populated from the ark’s inhabitants.

Among Hashem’s instructions to Noach was<sup>5</sup> “you shall make a ‘Tzohar’ for the ark ...” Rashi cites the word “Tzohar” from this verse and explains it as follows. “Some say that it was a window, and some say that it was a precious stone which gave them light.” In other words, Rashi is explaining that the word “Tzohar – צהר” is related to the word “Tzohorayim - צהריים,” connotating light. Hashem told Noach to build a source of light for the ark. Rashi tells us that according to one opinion of the Sages, it was a window. According to another, it was a precious stone.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

There are a number of difficulties with this explanation. First of all, the Torah’s word ‘Tzohar,’ and Rashi’s words *window* and *precious stone*, are all in the singular. How could one window or one stone have illuminated the ark? The ark was 300 cubits long (about 450’), by fifty cubits wide (approximately 75’) by thirty cubits high (approximately 45’)<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, our verse states that the ark had<sup>7</sup> “bottom (compartments), second story (compartments), and

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3. *Ibid.* 8:13.

4. *Ibid.* 6:14.

5. *Ibid.* 6:16.

6. *Ibid.* 6:15.

7. *Ibid.* 6:16.

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third story (compartments).” Rashi, citing these words, explains that there were “three stories, one above the other; the upper compartments were for people, the middle ones for animal dwellings, and the bottom ones for waste matter.” In other words, the vessel had separate compartments and separate floors. Perhaps it is possible for there to be either a window large enough or a jewel that was bright enough to illuminate that large area. However, how could there have been a window or a jewel that illuminated different rooms on different floors!

After the flood, Hashem promised that from this point on<sup>8</sup> “so long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Rashi quotes the words from the verse “and day and night will not cease,” and explains as follows. “From here we deduce that they (day and night) ceased for the duration of the Flood: the planets did not function, and daytime was indistinguishable from the nighttime.” If there was no daylight throughout the flood, why would Hashem command Noach to make a window?

Noach and his entourage remained on the ark for approximately one year. However, the rain actually fell on the ground for forty days and nights<sup>9</sup>. Perhaps, it was just during the forty days of flooding that the sun did not shine. That was when the day could not be distinguished from the night. Perhaps during the rest of that year, the sun did shine; which would explain the purpose of a window. However, this still does not explain how a window benefited Noach and his family during the first forty days.

Additionally, we find that Rashi offers two explanations of Tzohar; a window or a gem. Rashi offers two explanations if there is a difficulty with each. The first is always closer to the simple meaning of the verse, but it contains a difficulty which is answered by the second explanation. We need to understand what the problem is with each of Rashi’s explanations, a window or a precious gem, and why the first is better.

### **The Explanation**

The explanation of all of this is as follows. When Hashem told Noach to build the ark, He did not delineate every single detail which would be involved in its construction. For example, we find that Hashem told Noach to remove the cover from the ark<sup>10</sup>; yet we don’t find that Noach was ever commanded to make a covering! According to the opinion that ‘Tzohar’ means a gem, we do not find anywhere that Noach was commanded to build a window in the ark. We also do not find that Noach was commanded to build an entrance to the ark.

Why is this so? The reason is understood according to Peshat. It can be understood even by a young child who is just beginning to study the Torah. Hashem told Noach to build an ark. This obviously included everything

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8. *Ibid.* 8:22.

9. *Ibid.* 7:12.

10. See footnote 3.

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which was needed in order for the ark to function. The only commands related to the construction of the ark which Hashem specified, were those things which Noach would not have understood on his own.

Based on this it is clear that there was no reason for Hashem to command Noach to prepare illumination for the ark. They obviously had to be able to see where they were going. This is especially true because he and his children were commanded to feed and tend to all of the animals which were present<sup>11</sup>. Even a young child understands that Noach had to set up a system for illuminating the ark.

From this, we understand, that when Noach was commanded to make a ‘Tzohar,’ meaning a light, he was actually being commanded to make an *additional* source of light for the ark. Rashi offers two possible meanings as to what this additional light-source was. According to the first opinion, ‘Tzohar’ was a window. It would serve to shed additional light after the first forty days in the ark. Despite the fact that it did not add a great deal of light, and it did not serve any purpose for the first forty days, it had other uses. It supplied air to the ark and was a way of bringing things into and out of the ark.

However, this explanation is not sufficient. The fact that the window is referred to as ‘Tzohar,’ i.e. a source of light, means that its primary purpose was to supply light. Even though it did serve other purposes, as a light-source it was very limited. Therefore, Rashi also offers a second explanation; namely that it was a precious stone. This explanation has the advantage that a gem could (1.) be carried to all parts of the ark, and (2.) help supply light even during their first forty days on the ark.

Nonetheless, this opinion is more difficult according to Peshat than the first. Had “Tzohar” meant a precious stone, the Torah would have said to “bring a Tzohar” rather than to “make a Tzohar.” That is why Rashi uses this as the second explanation.

### **A Deeper Lesson from Rashi**

Besides explaining the simple meaning of the Torah, Rashi’s commentary also contains, albeit in a more hidden manner, the mysteries of the Torah. These are referred to as<sup>12</sup> “the wine of Torah.” Just as drinking wine reveals that which is hidden within a person, so too does Rashi bring out that which is hidden within the Torah. What is the deeper meaning which is contained within this Rashi?

Rashi discusses two different sources of light; a window, and a precious jewel. What is the difference between the two? The light which comes through a window is light which comes from outside. On the other hand, the light from the precious stone comes from within, from the essence of the stone. These actually allude to two different manners in the service of Hashem.

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11. See Tractate Sanhedrin 108b.

12. See Hayom Yom, 29 Shevat.

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There is G-dly light in the world. The problem is that it is concealed there. Our job is to be involved with the world around us. Through our occupation with the world, we must bring out the Divine light within it. The first step is to make a “window” in the world, in order to bring out the concealed Divine light. Once that is done, we must rise above nature, and reach a higher level of G-dly illumination. For that, we need the “precious stone,” the G-dly light which is within each of us. We will then certainly illuminate the world with the coming of Moshiach.

*(Adapted from talks given on Shabbos Noach 5731)*

**I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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