

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 20

Noach, Sicha 2

The Context:

The Torah summarizes the lifespan of Noach: "And all the days of Noach were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." (Bereishis 9:29) However, a seeming discrepancy arises when considering the timeline of the Flood. The Torah states that Noach was 600 years old when the Flood began (Ibid 7:6). The waters receded after a year (Ibid 8:13-14), and Noah lived for another 350 years after the Flood (Ibid 9:28-29).

Given this, one might expect that Noah should have lived for 951 years: 600 years before the Flood, one year during the Flood, and 350 years after the Flood. Yet, the Torah explicitly states that Noah lived for 950 years.

Rashi's (Non) Approach:

This question is addressed in the Midrash, which states that the year of the Flood is not counted as part of Noah's life. The question then arises: why doesn't Rashi, the

foremost commentator on the Torah, address this apparent discrepancy?

The key to understanding this lies in the way the Torah calculates the years of a person's life. The Torah does not always measure the exact number of years in the precise sense we might expect. Instead, it often rounds the numbers or provides an approximate figure.

In Noach's case, the Torah uses the number 950 to describe his lifespan in a general sense. The calculation of 950 years is not meant to be taken with absolute precision down to the exact year, but rather as an approximation that rounds to the nearest whole year.

According to the explanation, when the Torah records a person's age, it isn't necessarily providing an exact count but is instead indicating a general period in which certain events took place. For example, when it says that Noah was 600 years old when the Flood began, this could mean that the Flood started at some point during the 600th year of his life, not necessarily on the exact day he turned 600.

Similarly, when the Torah says Noah lived for 950 years, it could be counting from the beginning of his 600th year and ending when he reached the beginning of his 951st year. The Torah rounds the total to 950 years, even though, technically, if we added up each year exactly, it could come out to a bit more or less. This rounding approach is in line with the Torah's purpose, which is not to give a precise chronology but rather

to convey the general lifespan and significant events in Noah's life.

Rashi felt no need to comment on this dilemma because he assumes that readers will understand that the Torah's way of counting years is approximate and that the focus is on the general span of a person's life and the key events within it, rather than an exact accounting of each individual year.
