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# Derashah on Isaiah 54:9 — “מי נה” and “זאת לי”:

## From Waters of Judgment to Waters of Covenant\*\*

There is a moment in Isaiah’s great prophecy of consolation where the language suddenly becomes unusual, almost jarring. In Isaiah 54:9, God says to Israel:

כי מי־נה זאת לי

“For this is like the waters of Noah to Me...”

Two questions leap out.

First: **Why call the flood “מי נה” — the waters of Noah?**

The Torah never uses that phrase. It always says “מי המבול,” the waters of the flood. Why does Isaiah shift the language?

Second: **Why the strange phrasing “זאת לי” — “this to Me”?**

It would have been simpler to say “זאת,” “this,” or “לי זאת,” “this is to Me.” The syntax is emphatic and unusual.

These two questions are not grammatical curiosities. They open a window into the heart of Isaiah’s message — and into the deep spiritual structure of God’s covenant with the world.

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## 1. Why “מי נה”? The Flood as Noah’s Waters

Chazal famously say that the flood is attributed to Noah because he did not pray for his generation. In that sense, the waters are “his.” But Isaiah is not rebuking Noah. He is comforting Israel. So the attribution must be positive.

The Zohar offers a deeper reading:

The waters are called “מי נה” because **through Noah, the waters were transformed.**

They began as מי דין — waters of harsh judgment.

But through Noah’s righteousness, obedience, and sacrifice, they became מי רחמים — waters bound by divine mercy.

After the flood, God swears never again to destroy the world with water. The very waters that once destroyed the world become the foundation of a covenant of compassion.

Thus Isaiah invokes not “מי המבול,” the destructive waters, but “מי נה,” **the rectified waters — the waters as sweetened through Noah.**

Isaiah is saying:

*Remember the flood not as destruction, but as the moment when judgment was transformed into mercy.*

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## 2. Why “זאת לי”? The Covenant Rooted in the Divine Self

The phrase “זאת לי” is grammatically unusual. It is not simply “this is like the waters of Noah,” but:

**“THIS — to Me — is like the waters of Noah.”**

The word “לי” here is not informational. It is covenantal. It signals a personal, intimate divine commitment.

In the language of the sefirot:

- “זאת” is a name for **Malchut**, the sefirah of covenant, manifestation, and the interface between divine judgment and mercy.
- “לי” indicates that this covenant is rooted in **the Divine Self**, not dependent on human merit.

God is saying:

**This promise is Mine. It comes from Me. It is not contingent. It is essential.**

Just as the covenant after the flood was unconditional — “never again shall the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh” — so too the promise in Isaiah is unconditional. It is not merely a historical analogy but a metaphysical one.

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## 3. The Deeper Pattern: Judgment Transformed Into Mercy

Isaiah is not comparing two events. He is revealing a cosmic pattern.

The flood begins as destruction but ends as covenant.  
Exile begins as judgment but ends as redemption.

The same divine movement — from din to rachamim — underlies both.

<b>Flood</b>	<b>Isaiah</b>
Waters of judgment	Waters transformed into mercy
Noah as tzaddik	Israel as tzaddik of history
Covenant never to destroy	Covenant never to abandon
“מי המבול”	“מי נח”
Rainbow	Redemption

Isaiah is saying:

**Just as the flood became the foundation of an eternal promise,  
so too your suffering will become the foundation of an eternal redemption.**

And more than that:

**This promise is “לי” — rooted in My essence.  
It cannot be broken.  
It cannot be undone.**

## **\*\*4. The Derashah’s Heart:**

The Waters That Destroyed Become the Waters That Protect\*\*

The brilliance of Isaiah’s phrase “מי נח” is that it reframes the flood.  
It is no longer the symbol of destruction.  
It becomes the symbol of divine compassion.

The waters that once overwhelmed the world now guarantee its survival.

And Isaiah says:  
*So too with you, Israel.*

Your tears, your exile, your suffering — they are not meaningless.  
They are not wasted.  
They are the raw material of redemption.

Just as the floodwaters were transformed into a covenant,  
so too your pain will be transformed into a promise.

And that promise is not fragile.  
It is not conditional.  
It is not historical.  
It is “לי” — bound to God’s very being.

## 5. The Teaching to Carry Forward

When we read Isaiah's words, we hear a profound message:

- No destruction is final.
- No judgment is absolute.
- No exile is permanent.
- Every flood contains the seed of a covenant.
- Every moment of din can be sweetened into rachamim.
- And the promise of redemption is not dependent on us alone — it is rooted in God's own essence.

“כי מִי־נִחַ זֹאת לִי”

*This — this moment, this suffering, this exile — is like the waters of Noah to Me.*

*Just as I transformed those waters into mercy, so too I will transform this.*

*And My promise to you is eternal.*

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## Shabbat Derashah: “מי נח” — Turning Waters of Judgment Into Waters of Mercy

In this week's haftarah of consolation, the Navi Yeshayahu says something unusual:

כי מִי־נִחַ זֹאת לִי

“For this is like the waters of Noah to Me.”

Two questions immediately arise.

First: Why call the flood “מי נח”, the waters of Noah?

The Torah never uses that phrase — it always says “מי המבול.”

Second: Why the strange wording “זאת לי” — “this to Me”?

The phrase is emphatic and personal in a way that feels deliberate.

Chazal explain that the flood is linked to Noah because he was the one who survived it, rebuilt the world after it, and ultimately became the vessel through which God made a new covenant. But the Zohar adds something deeper: the waters are called “מי נח” because **through Noah, the waters were transformed.**

They began as waters of destruction, מי דין, but through Noah's righteousness and the covenant that followed, they became מי רחמים — waters bound by divine mercy. The very waters that once destroyed the world became the foundation of God's promise never to destroy again.

That is why Isaiah uses this phrase. He is not reminding us of destruction. He is reminding us of **transformation**.

And then God says: “זאת לי” — *this promise is Mine*.

Just as I transformed the waters of the flood into a covenant of compassion, so too I will transform your suffering into redemption. And this promise is not conditional. It is not fragile. It is rooted in Me.

The message for us on Shabbat is simple and powerful:

**No flood in our lives is final.**

**No moment of judgment is the end of the story.**

**Every hardship can become the beginning of a covenant.**

Just as the waters of Noah became waters of mercy, so too every challenge we face can become a source of blessing, growth, and divine closeness.

“כי מי־נח זאת לי” —

*Your story, too, can become like the waters of Noah:  
not a symbol of destruction, but a promise of compassion.*

May we merit to see the transformation of all our “floods” into comfort, and all our tears into the waters of redemption.

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### Two-Minute Derashah: “נח מי” — Waters That Became a Promise

In the haftarah this week, Hashem tells us:

כי מי־נח זאת לי

“This is like the waters of Noah to Me.”

Two things are strange.

First, why call the flood “מי נח”, the waters of Noah?

The Torah never calls it that — it always says “מי המבול.”

Second, why the unusual phrase “זאת לי” — “this to Me”?

The answer is a message of nechamah.

The Zohar teaches that the waters are called “מי נח” not because Noah caused the flood, but because **through Noah, the waters were transformed**. They began as waters of destruction, but through Noah’s righteousness and the covenant that followed, they became waters of mercy — the basis of God’s promise never again to destroy the world.

So Isaiah deliberately avoids the phrase “מי המבול.”

He reminds us not of destruction, but of **transformation**.

And then God says “זאת לי” — this promise is Mine.  
Just as I turned the flood into a covenant of compassion, so too I will turn your suffering into redemption. This promise is not conditional. It is rooted in Me.

The message for us is simple:

**No flood in our lives is final.**  
**Every moment of judgment can become the beginning of mercy.**  
**Every hardship can become the seed of a covenant.**

Just as the waters of Noah became waters of promise, so too may all our challenges be transformed into blessing, comfort, and peace.

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### 30-Second Derashah: “נה מי”

In the haftarah, Hashem tells us:

כי מי־נה זאת לי

“This is like the waters of Noah to Me.”

Why call the flood “מי־נה”?

Because, the Zohar says, through Noah the waters were transformed. They began as destruction, but through his righteousness they became the foundation of a covenant — a promise of mercy.

And that’s why God adds “זאת לי” — *this promise is Mine*.

Just as I turned the flood into compassion, so too I will turn your suffering into redemption.

The message is simple:

**No flood in our lives is final.**  
**Every hardship can become the beginning of mercy.**

May we see all our “waters” transformed into blessing.

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