



## **Noach: Exercising Control**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“These are the generations (toldos) of Noach, Noach was a righteous man; he was perfect in his generations; Noach walked with God.” (Genesis 6:9)*

The commentaries point out something peculiar in this verse. Whenever it says, *Eyleh toldos* (these are the generations), we list of the name of the father followed by his offspring. As such, we would have expected the verse to list the sons of Noach.

Rashi comments, *“Another explanation [for why the names of the children are not mentioned immediately following, “These are the generations of Noah”]: To teach you that the main generations [progeny] of the righteous are good deeds.”*

With this simple statement, Rashi teaches us a powerful life lesson. The real offspring of the righteous are not their biological children but rather, their good deeds. You cannot control how your children turn out. Every parent has a responsibility to create a holy and wholesome home, model the right behavior, and lead by example. But at some point, the child leaves the home and must decide who he or she wants to be. I can do everything “right”, yet my child may choose something different. Eventually, every parent realizes, I cannot control my child’s decisions. But it is not just with our children. There are many things we like to control. And as we get older, we realize we simply cannot. Over the last number of months, we have truly learned what it means to lose control. Yet, there is one thing that I do control and that is me. I control the person I want to become, the dreams I dream, and the aspirations I yearn to see materialize. I control if I work hard or if I hardly work. I control the attitude I have and the perspective I adopt. I control me. This is the deeper meaning of Rashi, *Eyleh toldos Noach*. What was the real offspring of Noach? What did Noach birth into this world? Noach. His true offspring, his true progeny was himself. Our greatest creation in this world is not our children, our careers, or our worldly accomplishments. Our greatest creation is our self. This is the only creation you truly control.

We spend so much time trying to control the things we cannot control while neglecting the things we can. We get upset when we people do not do what they were “supposed to do.” We get angry when circumstances do not materialize as they “should have.” I cannot control another person (even my own child), and I certainly cannot control many of the circumstances and situations which unfold around me. We must stop trying to control the uncontrollable, and instead, direct our efforts inward. We will have many types of offspring. We will hopefully be blessed with biological offspring, accomplishment offspring, and career offspring. But the most important offspring, the only one you really control and shape – is you.