



NOAH'S FLOOD

NOAH IS CALLED A RIGHTEOUS MAN, A TZADDIK, BUT DID HE act in the best way possible? On the one hand, at a time when everyone else had abandoned themselves to violence, Noah believed in G-d, Who watches and judges the deeds of men. As we see in the Sedra¹, Noah was good, despite the fact that everyone around him was evil.

But the Rabbis tell us that being good is not enough. Chassidic teachings explain that there are two types of Tzaddik (righteous person). When the room is freezing cold, one kind of Tzaddik wears a thick fur coat. He (or she) is warmed by his own good deeds. He is warm - but everyone else is cold.

The second kind of Tzaddik is different. He or she lights a fire so that everyone should be warm. This is a higher level.

Noah, who lived before the Giving of the Torah, has been described as the Tzaddik in the fur coat. He was content that he and his children did not murder or rob, and felt close to G-d. But he felt no responsibility for the other people living in his time.

In the Haftorah the Flood is described as the "Waters of Noah" (Is.54:9). The Zohar tells us that in a subtle way, the Flood was his fault. It was Noah's Flood².

By contrast, Abraham is the Jewish ideal. He discovered the idea that there is One G-d, and then tried to impart his knowledge and awareness to other people. He is the Tzaddik who lights the fire and makes everyone warm.

SURVIVING DAILY LIFE

One of the interpretations of the Flood is that it represents the difficulties of life³. We are swept by the swirling waters of anxiety, of the rat race, of the daily struggle. How can we prevent our sensitivity and humanity from being swept away?

Another variety of these swirling waters is the cultural currents of the modern world which seek to sweep away our Jewish dimension. “Why be different?” they murmur. “Just do the same as everyone else...”

The Song of Songs (8:7) tells us that “mighty waters cannot quench the love”. Deep in the heart of every Jew there is hidden a great love for G-d.

This love always remains, despite the worries and troubles, despite cultural change. It is our love for G-d, for the infinite freedom which our bond with G-d can grant us.

Through Jewish life we reveal this love and enable it to give inspiration and meaning to our lives. Further, we know that this is not only for ourselves as the Jewish people. The ultimate purpose of our Judaism is to transform all society, all humanity.

Yet we start this process of transformation at home. The Friday night table, the candles, Kiddush, speaking words of Torah, singing of Shabbat table songs, prayer and observance of other laws of Judaism help us to overcome the Flood and, like Noah when he left the Ark, to enjoy every step in an ever new world.

1. Genesis 6:9-11:32. 2. Zohar I 67b, 254b; III 14b. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Likkutei Sichot* vol.2 p.452. 3. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p.4.

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SEDRA NOAH

OTHERS FIRST

Alex Stern was sitting at the table enjoying Shabbat dinner with his family and guests, when he heard his mother calling him from the kitchen. Alex went to see what his mother wanted.

“Alex, can you please help me prepare the dessert? Look, I’m scooping the ice-cream into the bowls and you can garnish it with sprinkles however you want.” Alex enjoyed helping his mother with dessert, so he gently poured the multi-coloured sprinkles on top of each scoop of ice cream.

“That looks beautiful,” Mrs Stern complimented him with a smile, “You’re really very good at this!” Alex beamed. When he finished decorating all of them, he took one ready plate from the counter and went to the table to sit down and enjoy his carefully prepared dessert. It was wonderful, he thought. Really enjoyable.

A few moments later, Mrs Stern came in carrying a tray with the rest of the plates. She handed out the plates with dessert to Alex’s father, to the guests and then to the rest of Alex’s siblings. Then she returned to the kitchen with the empty tray. Alex heard his name being called softly again. He didn’t want to leave his half finished dessert. His mother called again, so reluctantly he went to her in the kitchen.

“Alex, did you learn the Sedra this week in school?” his mother asked him.

“Of course we did, Mommy. It was so interesting! It was about Noah building the Ark because G-d told him that the whole world is going to be flooded! The whole world, Mom! Isn't that crazy! We think it's terrible when only the bathroom gets flooded, can you imagine what it would be like if the whole entire world was flooded?!”

His mother laughed. “Yes Alex, this week's Sedra is certainly very adventurous! I see you listened to your teacher very well! I'm so pleased. Now, Alex, did your teacher tell you about the part where the lion attacked Noah? Do you know what happened?” “Yes, we did learn about that. One day, Noah came late to feed the lion and the lion attacked him!”

“Exactly. Do you know why the lion attacked him?” “Well.. um..... nooo... I don't think we learnt that. Why did the lion attack Noah?”

“G-d wanted to show Noah that an animal's needs come before his own. This teaches us a very important lesson. We must consider others before ourselves. If G-d wanted to show Noah that an animal's needs come first, then how much more so do other people's needs come before ours.”

Alex turned quiet. “So you mean when we serve dessert at the Shabbat meal, we give to the guests and older people first before we sit down to eat it ourselves?”

“You're a smart boy, Alex. I know you're always a very kind and giving person. I think that just this time, you must have been so excited to eat the dessert you helped make, that you didn't think first.”

“I'm sorry Mommy, you're right, I really didn't mean to. Next week, can you let me serve the dessert so that I can make sure to serve the guests first?” “That's a great plan!” Mrs Stern beamed. “Now let's go back in to enjoy the ice cream before it all melts!”

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