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This week's Torah portion, Noach, contains the narrative of Noach and the Great Flood which covered the earth in his generation. After many months "at sea" in his ark, Noach opened the window to check on the sodden and water-logged world, to see if it had finally dried.

"In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month," Noach found that the earth was indeed "perfectly dry." It was then that G-d spoke to Noach and issued the command: "Go forth from the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you."

Why did Noach need a special command from G-d to induce him to leave the cramped quarters he had endured for so long? Why didn't Noach exit the ark joyously of his own accord as soon as he saw that the land was dry? Noach's reluctance to leave may be understood in light of the great miracle which occurred inside the ark itself. All the animals within it, the ferocious and the tame, miraculously co-existed peacefully with each other, contrary to their natural inclinations and instincts.

Just imagine the hundreds of different species sharing their relatively small living space (the entire ark was only three hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide) for an entire year – yet no animal caused harm to another the whole time!

Chasidic philosophy explains that the atmosphere in Noach's ark was akin to what will happen when Moshiach comes, when "the lion will lay down with the lamb" and peace will reign on earth. Noach, his family and all the animals in the ark enjoyed a peace which will return to the world only with the Final Redemption and the Messianic Era, speedily in our day.

Understandably, therefore, Noach was hesitant to leave the peaceful environment of the ark for the natural order that had existed before the Flood. The earth may have finally dried, but Noach preferred the Messianic existence within the confines of the ark to returning to the vast expanse of dry land which beckoned. He therefore needed G-d's encouragement to disembark, to begin the next chapter in mankind's history and to fulfill the purpose of creation – the establishment of a dwelling place for G-d down below in the physical world.

"Go forth from the ark" is likewise G-d's counsel to every Jew. The Jew is enjoined to go out of his "four cubits," no matter how rarefied and holy, to fill the earth with G-dliness and holiness according to Divine plan, through the learning of Torah and the observance of mitzvot. (Adapted from a talk of the Rebbe, L'Chaim 5755,#337)

"I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh." (6:17) Why did G-d choose a flood with which to punish mankind? Could he not have chosen another method to destroy the wicked? Another purpose of the flood, however, was to purify the world which had become unclean and defiled by its inhabitants. This is alluded to in the duration of the flood, forty days, and the requirement that a purifying mikva contain at least forty sa'a [a measure] of water. (Rabbi Shneur Zalman) www.ascent.org.il

And G-d said to Noah... Make yourself an ark (6:13-14) G-d has many ways to save someone--why did he make Noah toil to build the ark? In order that the people of his generation should see him occupied with the task for 120 years, and they should ask him, "Why are you doing this?" and he would tell them that G-d is bringing a flood upon the world. Perhaps, this would cause them to repent. (Rashi; Midrash Tanchuma)

When G-d said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me," Noah said: "what will You do with me?" But he did not pray for mercy for the world, as Abraham would pray for the city of Sodom.. This is why the Flood is called "the waters of Noah" (Isaiah 54:9)--he is culpable for them, because he did not appeal for mercy on the world's behalf. (Zohar)

Noah tried to save his generation by calling on them to repent. But the fact that he did not pray for them implies that, ultimately, it did not matter to him what became of them. Had he truly cared, he would not have sufficed with "doing his best" but would have implored the Almighty to repeal His decree of destruction--just as a person who's own life is in danger would never say, "Well, I did my best to save myself," and leave it at that, but would beseech G-d to help him.

In other words, Noah's involvement with others was limited to his sense of what he ought to do for them, as opposed to a true concern for their well-being. He understood the necessity to act for the sake of another, recognizing that to fail to do so is a defect in one's own character; but he fell short of transcending the self to care for others beyond the consideration of his own righteousness.

This also explains a curious aspect of Noah's efforts to reach out to his generation. When the Flood came, Noah and his family entered the ark--alone. His 120-year campaign yielded not a single baal teshuvah (repentant)! Perhaps public relations was never Noah's strong point, but how are we to explain the fact that, in all this time, he failed to win over a single individual?

But in order to influence others, one's motives must be pure; in the words of our sages, "Words that come from the heart, enter the heart." Deep down, a person will always sense whether you truly have his interests at heart or you're filling a need of your own by seeking to change him. If your work to enlighten your fellow stems from a desire to "do the right thing" but without really caring about the result, your call will be met with scant response. The echo of personal motive, be it the most laudable of personal motives, will be sensed, if only subconsciously, by the object of your efforts, and will ultimately put him off. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) - chabadonline.com

EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM NOAH'S ARK

- 1 - Don't miss the boat
- 2 - Remember that we are all in the same boat.
- 3 - Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
- 4 - Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
- 5 - Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
- 6 - Build your future on high ground.
- 7 - For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
- 8 - Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
- 9 - When you're stressed, float a while.
- 10 - Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
- 11 - No matter the storm, when you are with G-d, there's always a rainbow waiting.

Source - Unknown

"BEREISHIT IS A CHEERFUL SEDRA, EVEN THOUGH ITS ENDING IS NOT ALL THAT PLEASANT. NOACH HAS THE FLOOD, BUT THE WEEK ENDS ON A HAPPY NOTE WITH THE BIRTH OF OUR FATHER AVRAHAM. THE REALLY JOYOUS WEEK IS THAT OF PARSHAT LECH L'CHA. WE LIVE EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK WITH AVRAHAM, THE FIRST TO DEDICATE HIS VERY LIFE TO SPREADING G-DLINESS IN THE WORLD. AND AVRAHAM BEQUEATHED HIS SELF-SACRIFICE AS AN INHERITANCE TO ALL JEWS." (1)
FOOTNOTE: 1. SEE TANYA CH. 18; ELUL 2.(FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, CHESHVAN 3)

Today we must be better than yesterday, and today we must prepare for a better tomorrow. - Rebbe