

A Taste of Torah

No Takers

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

I've always been puzzled by the pictures of Noah's ark that appear in children's books, toys, dishes, etc. These pictures always depict a bunch of happy, smiling animals and a bearded man standing on the ark while the sun shines brightly and a rainbow makes its way across the sky.

The reality is that the entire world was destroyed. All that remained of humanity were Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. All that remained of the animal kingdom were one couple of every non-kosher species, and seven couples of all kosher species. They were stuck inside the ark for an entire year. No going outside. In a state of semi-mourning for the destruction of the entire world.

Which brings me to my next point. If you're stuck in an ark for an entire year, with no ability to leave, you'd better have food available. And food there was. In fact, Hashem guaranteed Noah that the food he brought on board would not spoil. (This was before MSG was invented.)

By now you're probably wondering how all those animals got fed. After all, leaving a year's worth of food in an animal's pen isn't too wise; it probably won't last for the entire year. Not to worry, my friend, Noah was once again on the case. It was he who fed the animals (yes, all of them) during their stay in the ark. And he was always on time. Except once.

One fine day, Noah was late in feeding the lion. The lion was very unhappy about this, and to show his

appreciation for Noah's hard work, he kicked Noah, leaving him with a limp. A very strange incident indeed. For, although in your local zoo, the lion may naturally lash out at a zookeeper who is late with his food, on the ark, everything was Divinely orchestrated. The very fact that every specie, and the food necessary to maintain them, fit on a relatively small ark, which then survived the horrible weather conditions of the Flood (they weren't exactly calm seas, you know), is nothing short of miraculous. "Natural" had no place here. That being the case, we would expect Noah to get better treatment from Hashem for having been late one time, for one animal, during his entire year of service.

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, famed Mashgiach of the Ponovezh Yeshiva, explains that the Torah tells us that the decree of the Flood was sealed due to mankind's utter lack of respect for another's property. In other words, their fate was sealed because they had become takers instead of givers. Noah's merit to be saved was that he would be a giver; he would thus be spared the fate of the takers. Any lack of being a giver was to be included in the destruction of mankind. Thus, to be late was to be remiss in his role as a giver. A small shortcoming, to be sure, but a chink in the armor nonetheless. He thus suffered a small part of the general destruction of the world; he was left limping.

Something to keep in mind in today's day and age, as we watch the world teeter on the brink. Taking leads to destruction; giving to solution.

Stories For The Soul

Be the Best that You Can

"Noach was a tzaddik (righteous man), perfect in his generation" [Gen 6:9]

Rashi teaches us that there are two ways to understand this verse. One positive, and one negative. The negative way is that, had Noah lived in a better generation, the generation of Avraham for example, he would not have been considered anything special. Relative to his generation he was righteous.

The positive way is that despite living in a generation of sinners, Noah was not influenced by them and remained perfectly righteous. The bottom line is that we have to be responsible for our own success and happiness and not worry about, compare ourselves to, or be dragged down by others.

An elderly sage named Reb Zusha lay on his deathbed surrounded by his talmidim (students/disciples). He was crying and no one could comfort him. One student asked his Rebbe, "Why do you cry? You were almost as wise as Moshe and as kind as Avraham."

Reb Zusha answered, "When I pass from this world and appear before the Heavenly Tribunal, they won't ask me, 'Zusha, why weren't you as wise as Moshe or as kind as Avraham,' rather, they will ask me, 'Zusha, why weren't you Zusha?' Why didn't I fulfill my potential, why didn't I follow the path that could have been mine."

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

*The Kollel is on Sukkos break.
Programs resume Sun, Oct. 10.*

FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., OCT. 10 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on October 10th at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org



'ALLOW NATURAL DEATH?' AT OCT. 13 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Lynn Taussig, Special Advisor to the Provost at the University of Denver, Retired President of National Jewish Hospital, and Kollel Dean Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab for "Allow Natural Death? End of Life Decisions and Dementia" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Oct. 13. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



PARTNERS IN TORAH AT AISH TO RESUME WED., OCT. 13

The Kollel's Partners in Torah program for men at Aish Denver, which is on Sukkos break, will resume on Wed., Oct. 13. If you'd like to join - and learn the topic of your choice, at your own pace, with a knowledgeable mentor - please call the Kollel at 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues Exceptional Danger

One may not steal even to avoid pain or sickness, despite his intention to repay the stolen item. For example, one may not steal to pay off someone who threatens to injure him for his failure to provide him with a sum of money.

An exception to the above is if one is in a life-threatening situation. In such a case, one may steal to save a life - provided he makes restitution at a later time.

Another exception is where one needs another's item to avoid a sudden potential loss. For example, if one's bottle of whiskey suddenly developed

a crack, he may take another's utensil into which he can pour the whiskey. Again, this is only permitted if he makes restitution for any loss or danger to the owner's item.

Because there are those who disagree with the second exception, a ba'al nefesh (a very scrupulous individual) will be stringent and not rely on this dispensation.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi Punishment without a Crime?

Jeannine Berman wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

In Ki Sisa I read that Hashem remembers good deeds for thousands of generations. However, the bad deeds of the current generation (mother and father) are carried onward for three or four generations. This infliction on those who are yet unborn or on those who are not directly responsible for the bad deeds does not feel right to me. Maybe you could provide me with some positive thoughts. Thank you and best regards.

Dear Jeannine Berman,

My first positive thought: "Its [the Torah's] ways are ways of pleasantness and all Its paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). Let's look at the verse you quoted: "[Hashem] recalls the iniquity of parents upon children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generations."

Does this mean that Hashem punishes the children for the sins of their parents?

According to the classical commentaries, the emphasis of the verse is not that the children are

punished for their parents' sins. In fact, this verse describes the "13 Attributes of Mercy" used by Hashem in ruling the Creation.

The wicked person deserves to be destroyed right away. Instead, Hashem gives him an extension, to allow him to repent, or to bear righteous offspring. If, however, after four generations the offspring remain wicked, Hashem is "faced with a choice." He can grant another reprieve to this generation, just as he did for their ancestors. Or, he can punish/destroy them as they deserve. At this point, Hashem decides to go with the latter option. Why? Because He "recalls the sins of the fathers." This means that He remembers that these offspring themselves are already the result of a merciful extension, and they have already benefited from several generations of patience.

But what He really wants is that each person who strayed from the pleasant ways of the Torah will return to Him, and receive reward.

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