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Parshah Noach
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-10-29

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G-d tells Noach he is the only righteous man in a world filled with a lot of violence. He asks Noach to build a large wooden ark. Noach didn't know at the time, but he and his family were the only ones to remain on the earth. G-d planned to wipe out the rest of the world, for they were acting in evil ways. The ark was going to float upon the water and shelter his family. It wasn't just his family that would survive, but two animals one male and one female that was allowed to be on this ark. Rain fell for forty days and forty nights and the water churned for a hundred and fifty days more before the storm calmed down. The ark settled on what was known as Mount Ararat and Noach dispatched a raven and a series of doves.

He was trying to see if the water had stopped from the face of the earth. When the ground was completely dry it had been exactly one solid year after the onset of the flood that G-d put in place. That was when G-d commanded Noach to leave the ark. The flood was done and he too could get out of the flood. Some commentators say that Noach had gotten quite comfortable on this ark. Life was good there and he didn't want to get off the boat, that wasn't his original plan at least. G-d wanted Noach to get off the earth, so he could go repopulate it again. Noach did what G-d said of course, reluctantly and then he went and built an altar. He offered sacrifices to G-d, and in return G-d stated that He would never destroy all of mankind because of their awful acts. G-d puts out a rainbow in the sky, this is a testimony from G-d to Noach to prove that He will keep His word. This was G-d's way of making a new covenant with man, this is when G-d commands Noach regarding the sacredness of life.

G-d explains to Noach that murder is seen as a capital offense. G-d continues to say that man is allowed to kill animals for the sake of eating meat. What man is not allowed to do is eat the flesh or blood of any animal while they are still alive. After hearing this information from G-d, Noach goes and plants a vineyard, unfortunately for him, he got drunk from the produce. Noach had two sons whose names were Shem and Japheth, they walked in on him being drunk in the vineyard. Not only was he drunk, but he was naked and when the sons saw their father they quickly covered him up. This act of covering their father up, caused G-d to bless them. We learn that Noach had a third son named Ham, and he was punished for taking advantage of his debasement. The descendants of Noach have remained as a single group of people. They had one language and one culture for ten generations.

They did something very wrong, they defied their Creator by building a great tower. It was their way of symbolizing their invincibility. When they did this, G-d confused their languages so one couldn't comprehend the tongue of the other. Not being able to understand each other anymore, they abandoned their project and started spreading out across the face of the earth. Eventually, this one group of people stemming from Noach, split into seventy nations. The Parsha Noach comes to an end with a chronology of ten generations. These generations start with Noach and go to Abraham, who later becomes Avraham. Then there is the journey from where Avraham was born in Ur Casdim to Charan and eventually, he made his way to the land of Canaan.

The Parsha has given the details of what happened. From the beginning of the Parsha we learn that Noach was a tzaddik. With that said, we need to reflect on how Noach didn't pray for the people in his generation. A Jewish source called the Zohar, explains that his failure to not pray for the people shows he was selfish. Noach heard that he personally was going to survive, yet the fate of the other people didn't bother him. He didn't question what would happen to the lives of many others. He knew that he and his family were going to be taken care of, and worrying about the fate of mankind, in general, was not crucial to him. Another source called Sefer Aish Dass says Noach's attitude about the world and life, in general, came from misplaced modesty. What is meant by misplaced modesty in this context is, Noach was known to be a very humble person. He didn't believe that he was worthy of being saved.

With everything that we know about Noach, he didn't think he was capable of annulling a Heavenly decree. Not a heavenly decree that was going to count for an entire generation. G-d had really high hopes for Noach. He was hoping that Noach would reach out to his fellowmen and speak to them, even if the outcome wasn't successful. The main lesson from this Parsha for us Jews now, G-d wanted Noach to at least try. G-d wants us to at least try in our everyday life.