

Dvar Torah for Parshat Noach

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October 7, 2010

Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #7

“God said to Noach...‘Build yourself an ark...’” (Genesis 6:13–14).

Noach’s Ark is Yom Kippur (*Tikkuney Zohar* #6, p. 22a).

If you live in Eretz Yisrael, you already know that Chanukah is in the air. The local *maqolet* (grocery store) is already selling *sufganiyot* (deep-fried jelly donuts)—even though Chanukah is two months away!

But there really is a hint of Chanukah already on the spiritual horizon. The above *Tikkuney Zohar* not just links, but identifies Noach’s Ark with Yom Kippur. And Rebbe Nachman teaches that the quality of your Chanukah depends on how effective your Yom Kippur *slach na* (please forgive!) is. (Namely, how great a degree of atonement was reached.)

“Now you tell me?! Yom Kippur was three weeks ago! If you would’ve told me then, I would’ve wailed a little louder, cried a little harder and repented with a bit more oomph and sincerity. What good does it do me now to know that I can build my Chanukah on Yom Kippur?!”

Relax. You underestimate the timelessness of Yom Kippur, your Jewish ability to be supra-rational and the greatness of the tzaddikim who can find hope in a deluge of despair—and do. In a letter to his son Yitzchak, written just a few weeks before Chanukah, Reb Noson says, “One can, and must, pray every day that his *slach na* of Yom Kippur be accepted. *Teshuvah* (returning to God) is a mitzvah every day. As we do our *teshuvah*, we draw some Yom Kippur sacredness into the day” (*Alim l’Terufah*,* Letter #209).

So any time you return—voila! it is Yom Kippur and you're able to prepare for Chanukah. But wait a minute. How, or what, is the connection between my Yom Kippur success, my Chanukah and—Noach's Ark? It's like this.

One point that connects them is re-beginning. The purpose of Yom Kippur forgiveness is not to get us off the hook and “start running up a tab” again. Its purpose is to allow us a newborn's service of and connection with God. The root of the word Chanukah means initiation. Having evicted the foreign influences from the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple), we were again able to begin the process of *mosif v'holeikh*, continually adding light to the world. Noach? After the world was washed clean, he was the new Adam, the new progenitor of humankind—of the whole enterprise of Creation!

A second point of connection is desire and longing. Noach's Ark did not have a scheduled route, picking up whoever happened to be waiting. Each “two by two” of animals and birds, Noach's own family and Noach himself, had to show their faith in God by going to the Ark and coming aboard. Yochanan, the *Kohen Gadol*, and his Maccabee family showed real desire for God by refusing to be awed by the spectacle of Greek power and wisdom. Our *mosif v'holeikh*, lighting an additional lamp each night of Chanukah, is a gentle self-reminder that we, each one of us, can add true light to the world without insisting on the spotlight. But you can't add light by inertia; you have to want to.

Which brings us back to *slach na*. Real *teshuvah* is not determined by the number of tears shed or the volume of one's wailing. It is determined by the degree of desire, of how much you want to fill the space between God and you, no matter what might be asked of you. When you regret your disinterest in Jewishness and the resultant haphazard or sloppy efforts to live Jewishly, and place God and His Torah as the focal point and standard of your life, your Yom Kippur *slach na* gains depth today, now. You've boarded Noach's Ark, guaranteeing the

world's future. You've laid the foundation and started the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash. May we merit seeing it, soon, in our lifetime. Amen.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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