



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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Noah's Greatest Challenge

Noah is a complicated and mysterious man. While the Torah introduces Noah as a tzaddik tamim b'dorosav, a righteous individual [who was] complete in his generations, Rashi notes that this description has two possible meanings: either that Noah was righteous despite the spiritual failings of his generations, or he was only righteous when compared to his corrupt and violent peers.

Many commentators praise Noah for his righteousness, noting his strength in resisting the negative influences around him. While the rest of the world descended into immorality, Noah's commitment to goodness and G-dliness was steadfast.

However, one of the greatest criticisms of Noah is that, in the 120 years that

he spent building his ark, he was either unable or unwilling to motivate the rest of his generation to repent for their evil ways. Chassidic masters compare Noah to a man sitting in the cold with a group of people. The man can either build a fire and warm the whole room or wrap himself in a fur coat, warming only himself. Noah is a tzaddik wrapped in a fur coat while his neighbors shiver.

There is, however, a third option: a man sitting alone in the cold, wrapping himself tightly to stay warm next to a fire that no one else is drawn to. Perhaps Noah's peers were so far gone that no rebuke could have brought them back, and Noah's solitude and lack of outreach stemmed from a fear of sinking beneath the floodwaters of evil that consumed his generation. He was only able to remain righteous because he pulled back and focused on his own connection to G-d. The unique strength of realizing when to put oneself first is what made Noah the right person to survive the flood. But next,

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we have the challenge of then putting oneself second, reaching out, and seeing the good in others.



Ayelet Steinberger
Jerusalem,
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United We Stand

In our parasha we witness two phenomena of human deterioration. The first one is that people were stealing from each other, which led to the mabul/flood and extinction of almost all mankind. The second is the tower of Bavel which was a tower built by a people who decided to start a new empire of sorts. We see that G-d didn't kill them, rather he just scattered them.

Rashi explains that the differences between the two are that the mabul was a punishment for sins of Bein Adam Lechavero- between and amongst the people, whilst in the building the tower of Bavel tower went against G-ds will- but were united amongst themselves . These two punishments are an example for all of us to teach us an important lesson.

God is willing to be more forgiving towards people even when they go against his will as long as they are united and respect each other.

We just recently celebrated Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness. On this day all of our sins are forgiven except those that are *bein adam lechavero*. Even the holiest day won't help us be forgiven if we don't behave respectfully towards others and make amends with those who were hurt by us.

Right after Yom Kippur comes Sukkot which is a holiday where we all sit together and are united. It is also one of the 3 Regalim- Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot which are the times all the Jews from all over came to the Beit Hamikdash, holidays in which the focus is once again on unity.

I am grateful for the amazing opportunity that NCSY provides. A platform and opportunity to unite with my fellow Jewish brothers and sisters from all around the world. I wish you all a Shabbat shalom and a healthy winter! ■

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