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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

WHO DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO?

PARSHAS NOACH

*Chana was childless for 19 years! Her pain was intolerable, and she prayed, weeping bitter tears. Her husband, Elkanah, davened together with her. Finally, Elkanah despaired and gave up hope. At that point, when even her husband had given-up hope, Chana davened to Hashem with a greater intensity (Shmuel I 1:10). The **Talmud** (Brachos 31B) says that Chana davened with confidence, even specifying the type of child that she wanted. Hashem blessed her with a very special child who became one of the greatest prophets, Shmuel HaNavi. **Rabbi David Ashear** (Living Emunah) says, "In the merit of her bolstering her emunah just when she felt naturally inclined to despair, her prayers were answered and she was blessed with a child".*

Noach was a tzadik. He was able to maintain his devotion to Hashem despite the rampant immorality and thievery of the entire world! It is a tribute to a person who can maintain his values and not be affected by everyone around him acting in a degenerate way. Because of that, Hashem saved Noach from destruction.

The **Haftorah** quotes a pasuk which attributes the flood to Noach, as it calls the Flood, "the waters of Noach" (Yeshaya 54:9). That seems strange! The Flood was a punishment for a degenerate society devoid of morals and honesty! Why does the pasuk attribute it to Noach?!

The **Chasam Sofer** says that Noach was criticized for an inaction. Hashem had told Noach that He was going to destroy the entire world. Yet, that did not spur Noach to daven for the world as our forefather Avraham did when he heard that Hashem was about to destroy Sodom. The **Zohar** (Noach 67b) says, as well, that despite Noach's greatness, he was faulted for not having prayed on behalf of the people of his generation.

"Noach was a just man and perfect in his generations".
(Bereishis 6:9)

Was Noach expected to daven for such people? The people were such terrible sinners. They served idols, murdered, and had illicit relations. They stole from each other. The judges were corrupt. Furthermore,

Hashem gave the people 120 years to repent. During that time, Noach followed Hashem's command and built an Ark, a ship, to save himself and his family, as well as animals and birds. When the people passed by Noach, they asked him what he was doing. He told them and explained that if they did not repent, then Hashem would destroy the world. Not only did they laugh at Noach, they even cursed him. Were these the people that Noach was supposed to daven to Hashem to spare?

The answer is yes! Noach was supposed to daven even for such people. He had the ability to daven to Hashem to save the world. However, he did not do so. For that lapse, he was faulted.

Perhaps Hashem would have responded no to Noach's prayer, but at least Noach should have tried. Remarkably, his tefillos may have possibly been accepted! This is the power of tefillah!

Chazal tell us that a Jew who was going to the market to sell his goods would not want it to rain. Rain would cause the market to close. He wouldn't make money that month and his family would go hungry. If he would see a rain cloud on the horizon, he would give a heartfelt tefillah to Hashem that it

should not rain. This would be a powerful tefillah. However, rain is important for so many others. Therefore, the Kohain Gadol had to daven on Yom Kippur, in the Kodesh HaKadashim, the Holy of Holies, to counter this man's sincere prayer. The holiest Jew, on the holiest day, in the holiest place had to daven to counter the sincere prayer of one individual.

It is important to understand that Hashem does not need our prayers. Prayer is for our benefit to help us develop a relationship with Hashem. Hashem wants us to have that relationship. We can ask Hashem for any need or want that we have, be it big or small. We can even ask Hashem to help us get a parking spot. No request is too trivial because Hashem is our loving Father who wants to give to us. When we praise Hashem and thank Him for all that He does for us that also strengthens that relationship.

So, let's keep building that relationship by talking to Hashem.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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