

SHULWEEK

Dvar Torah: Noach

Noah took to the ark in fulfillment of G-d's command. He traveled with dedication and purpose. In contrast, many of us are "lost at sea" without a compass, when it comes to our own lives as the following true story illustrates:

There once was a Rav, a distinguished scholar, who possessed many exceptional qualities that earned him a great reputation. However, he had one character flaw: he was so obstinate that once he made up his mind about something, there was no way of ever changing his opinion.

One day, when traveling on a journey, the Rav lost his way and wandered through a forest for several days, frightened and confused. In his state of confusion, he lost count of the days and became convinced that Shabbos was really one day earlier than it really was. When finally, with G-d's help, he found his way out of the forest and back home, he insisted on observing Shabbos on Friday, despite the attempts of his family and congregation to inform him of his error.

The Rav held firm, insisting that his calculation was correct and that everyone else's calculations were a day off. And so, every Thursday evening he would dress up in his Shabbos finery, make kiddush and conduct a Shabbos tish (table) full of guests, with another elaborate Shabbos meal the next day. He would also insist that everyone else do the same. Needless to say, this was awkward for the community and embarrassing for his family.

Then someone had the idea to summon his childhood friend, the wise Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke of Nicholsburg to see if he could bring the Rav back to his senses. When Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke arrived, he instructed the people to play along with him: to dress for Shabbos on Thursday night and to join him and their Rav at the "Shabbos" table. When they were all assembled, Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke asked that wine be brought out - one after another so that he could toast l'chaim to everyone. The wine was very strong and while the Nicholsburger Rabbi only pretended to drink, the Rav of the city became more and more intoxicated, until he finally fell into a deep sleep.

The combination of strong wine and physical exhaustion caused the Rav to sleep until the next night, at which time everyone reassembled, dressed in their

Shabbos garb (which was no problem since this time, it actually was Shabbos). The Rav awoke and apologized to everyone for "napping," and concluded the Shabbos meal as usual. And so the Rav caught up to reality without even knowing it, and from then on observed Shabbos on the correct day. [The foregoing true story is documented in The Commentators Siddur by Rabbi Y. Sender.]

We often are blinded by our emotions. In our confusion and arrogance we do not listen to the voice of reason and become more distant from G-d, Torah and Israel. We pray that just as G-d showed Noah the way, may He give us the wisdom and discernment to find the proper path in life.

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