Jewish Tribune – Noach

**Keeping Warm this Winter**

There are two ways to stay warm in the cold. You can either wear a thick coat or you can light a fire keeping not only yourself warm, but others too.

Noach, is famously described as a "Tzaddik in peltz" (a Tzaddik wearing a fur coat). Whilst he and his family survived, the rest of his generation did not. Although, the Torah praises him lavishly, Chazal detect shortcomings and highlight his lack of mesirus nefesh for the rest of society. Indeed, in the haftora for Parshas Noach, the Novi calls the mabul “mei Noach” (the waters of Noach) as if to point the blame on him.

To understand this better, let us rewind a little. Very recently, on Simchas Torah, we were all sitting in our shuls, garden minyonim or homes to celebrate the completion of another cycle of Torah. And as we reached the final pesukim of Vzos Habracha, the Torah comes to its climax and Moshe Rabbeinu passes from this world, we read a powerful and poignant epitaph. As if we were reading the very words written on Moshe Rabbeinu’s matzeiva.

לֹא קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה – and there was no other novi who arose in Klal Yisroel like Moshe. And then the Torah lists some of the outstanding achievements of Moshe Rabbeinu – receiving and giving the Torah and all the miracles he performed in the Midbar and finally, his greatest accolade – he broke the luchos.

What!? Really!?

Doesn’t breaking the luchos put a bit of a dampener on things? As we chant “Chazak Chazak Ve’nischazek” we are left wondering why is that a highpoint of Moshe Rabbeinu’s life?

As is the minhag in Klal Yisroel, every year, Rabbi Pinchos Roberts would masterfully connect the beginning of the Torah with its end. One year, he contrasted the selflessness of Moshe Rabbeinu with Noach’s lack of consideration for the others in his generation.

Rabbi Roberts described how Moshe Rabbeinu must have been crushed with the sight that met him on his descent from Har Sinai - Klal Yisroel dancing around a golden calf. Despite his personal frustration and disbelief, he cherished Klal Yisroel and in order to rebuke them most effectively, he carried the very heavy luchos all the way down the mountain to break them “Le’eyneyhem” – in front of their very eyes. And then, in a staggering moment of selflessness, he rejects HKBH’s offer to start a new nation with him and tells Hashem: “מְחֵנִי נָא מִסִּפְרְךָ” – if you destroy Klal Yisroel, wipe me out of Your Torah. I’m with them.

Rabbi Roberts quoted R’Shaul Broch, the Kashau Rov, who explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was actually a gilgul of Noach. One of his missions in life was to repair Noach’s shortcoming of not being sufficiently concerned with the rest of his generation.

When Moshe Rabbeinu said the immortal words of מְחֵנִי נָא מִסִּפְרְךָ, he not only reached the height of selflessness, but he repaired Noach’s shortcoming. In fact, the word מְחֵנִי spell the words מֵי נֹחַ.

As ever, the weekly parsha is not just revisiting ancient episodes; rather the lessons are timely and timeless. And the call of this week’s parsha to show mesirus nefesh for others, to think and daven and help other people, is a case in point.

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