

A FLOOD OF SOMETHING...

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Noach did according to everything G-d commanded him, so he did! (Breishis 6:22)

Noach, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him went into the Ark because of the waters of the Flood. (Breishis 7:6)

...because of the waters of the Flood...Even Noach was from the small believers. He believed and he didn't believe that the Flood would come. Therefore he didn't enter the Ark until the waters forced him to do so. (Rashi)

Amazing! Noach spent one hundred and twenty years obediently building an Ark, in anticipation of the Flood. When the day finally arrives he's surprised. Only the rising waters can convince him it's really time. How can one believe and not believe simultaneously?

A woman in the birthing room was becoming increasingly frustrated and tired at the length of the process. The kindly birthing coach offered some encouraging words. She said, "Dear, you just give a little more effort and soon you'll have your baby." The woman looked at the birthing coach with a look of surprise and uttered the words, "Baby?"

The husband who was standing there was doubly amazed. He wondered to himself, "Baby?" What did she think we were doing here- having a tooth extracted? She knows we're having a baby! After four sonograms and nine months of expanding like this. We signed papers on the way in that we are here to have a baby! What in the world is she thinking?"

Only moments later, as the birthing coach had said, the baby was born. The feelings of joy and relief dissolved the distress of any momentary doubt. The husband's question remains, though.

Similarly, Jews have been singing and reciting with deep and fervent hope for centuries one of the thirteen fundamental principles, "I believe with a perfect conviction, in the coming of the Mashiach, and even though he tarries, even still, I anticipate his arrival each day."

If a written exam would be offered on the subject of, "What we believe!" many would be able to check off the correct box and get it right. Getting a 100% on the written exam, which is mostly cerebral, does not guarantee a good grade on the final exam, though.

The Sanzer Rav asked someone passing by his window what he would do if he found a wallet with some money inside. The fellow responded dutifully, "I would return it!" "Foolishness!" exclaimed the Rebbe. The next fellow when questioned answered, "Why I would keep it!" "Thief!" declared the

Rebbe. A third gentleman said, "I don't know what I would do Rebbe, but I hope I would have the moral resolve and strength to do the right thing and return it." "That man" the Rebbe acquiesced, "is a wise man!"

In the birthing room, the immediacy of the pain eclipses the obvious. Intellectually, the woman knows why she's there, but the unborn is not yet totally real. Therefore, preparing for some inevitability, good or bad, is sometimes all we can and should do. Better than a total surprise, it cushions a blow even though it cannot guarantee what our response will be at the time of impact.

That Noach believed and didn't is not a pure criticism. It tells us how deep the idea of belief can and must be. Whether through repeated verbal affirmations or concentrated visualization, as Noach dutifully built his Ark for many years, we can only prepare ourselves, and we must, for a flood of something...

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