

BEFORE IT RAINS

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Noach did all that HASHEM had commanded him, and Noach was six hundred years old and the flood waters were upon the earth. And Noach came and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him into the Ark because of the waters of the flood. (Breishis 7:5-7)

Because of the waters of the flood: Even Noach was from the small believers. He both believed and didn't believe that the flood would come, and therefore he didn't enter the Ark until the waters forced him. (Rashi)

Noach was a small believer? He didn't believe the waters of the flood would really come? How is that possible? He worked for 120 years and exposed himself to extreme ridicule just to build that Ark! The verse said "Noach did all that HASHEM had commanded him." How could he be from the small believers?

A similar accusation is made about Sara when she "laughed within herself" upon hearing that she would be having a child. Rashi (by the incident of Avraham's laughing) tells us that Sara was rebuked because her laughter betrayed her disbelief. Sara didn't believe? She prayed the length of her life for a child acknowledging that "HASHEM has held me back from bearing". Now in a lapse moment the Torah records her inner thoughts and tars her with the brush as someone who didn't believe in the possibility of what she has heard. Therefore she was in need of the rebuke, "Is something too wondrous for HASHEM?!"

The Chofetz Chaim points out that this faltering of belief is a foreshadowing of a future time when good Jews who have lived with the fervent hope that the Jewish People will again be restored to the Holy Land and the world set right, will confront the realization of their dreams. So many of us repeat and sing those words of the 13 Fundamental Principles of Judaism, "I believe with a perfect belief in the coming of the Moshiach, and although he tarries, even still I await his arrival each day!"

What will that good hearted loyal Jew think when he glances at the headlines one morning and discovers it announces in clear terms what he had hoped for his entire life? A good portion of him is in total disbelief, denying it strongly as a hoax. He is stricken with cognitive dissonance even after confirming the truth. Although he anticipated it on some level another part of him cannot process the actual paradigm shift.

How can one both believe and not believe simultaneously? Simple! A person is not one thing. Some pass the written exam of life with flying colors and still fail the driving test miserably. It is this

deficiency that we are warned about by Noach's reaction to the arrival of the flood waters and Sara's response to even good news.

Reb Chaim from Sanz posed a question to one of his Chassidim as he passed by. "What would you do if you found a wallet with a significant amount of money in it and there were clear identifiable signs for the owner to reclaim it?" The man said in all sincerity, "Why Rebbe, I would return it!" The Rebbe exclaimed, "Foolishness!" The next gentleman was asked the same question about the wallet to which he responded, "Rebbe, I would keep it!" "Ganav-Thief!" the Rebbe proclaimed. A third man on the street when asked about the wallet answered, "I don't know what I would do, Rebbe, but I hope I would have the moral resolve to do the right thing and return it to the rightful owner!" "Ahhhhh!", sighed the Rebbe from Sanz, "This is a wise man!"

We can't know with certainty what we will do when the even the anticipated surprises of life leap upon us. All we can do is prepare for the eventuality and the inevitability of "whatever" through study, prayer, and a good imagination, because the best time to buy an umbrella is before it rains. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).