

# THE RAINBOW COALITION

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

In all of human history, Noach, his wife Naamah, and their three sons were the most chosen of all people. Selected from among the probable billions of people who inhabited the pre-diluvian world, they alone were found righteous in the eyes of G-d.

Noach and his family were chosen because they were different from everyone else. They had withstood societies relentless assault against the six Mitzvos commanded to Adam and had remained uncompromised in their belief and devotion to G-d. In a world determined to obscure G-d's presence, the family of Noach remained in His image.

To believe in G-d is to accept that the world was created with reason and for a purpose. G-d's purpose is best revealed in the unique characteristics He designed for each species. Why else would He have made things different from each other if not to identify and direct their individual purposes? The more complex and individualized the differences the more profound G-d's intent.

For example: vegetables vs. animals and animals vs. humans. Within their individual species, vegetables are more similar to each other than not. There is little difference between one tomato and the next or one potato and another potato. Therefore, theirs is a limited destiny and existence. Their purpose is to serve as food or decoration, and little else. Animals, on the other hand, possessing greater mobility, intelligence and individuation are clearly more complex and therefore have a more profound destiny.

Animals are far more than part of the food chain. They contribute to commerce, travel, and industry. They serve humanity as pets, and provide us with food, clothing, and essential medical information. They experience pain, pleasure, loneliness, comfort and love. When the alter still stood in the Bais Hamikdash (Temple) animals were central to our properly serving G-d. Animals have individualized character. Therefore, G-d's intended purpose in creating the animal kingdom had to have been far more involved than His intention for creating the incalculable multitudes of vegetation.

Following the same logical approach we should note that humans are by far the most complex and individualized in all of creation. Therefore, we can conclude that G-d's intended purpose for humanity must be the most profound and important in all of creation.

It is also important to note that the more complex and individualized a certain creation, the smaller the number of its constituency. The number of individual vegetation that exist in the world (blades of

grass, weeds, flowers, vines, shrubs, trees etc.) far outnumbers by an incalculable amount the number of individual insects, fish, fowl and animals. Likewise, the number of individual insects, fish, fowl and animals far outnumbers the billions of humans that live upon earth. It seems that G-d established a natural hierarchy within creation. The more complex, individualized and advanced the creation the smaller the number of its constituency. The more complex, individualized, advanced and smaller the species the more profound their destiny. (From the perspective of being G-d's "Chosen people" extend this approach to understand why the Jews must remain "the smallest among all the nations.") Therefore, it makes sense to explore the nature of each species and their individuality in order to reveal G-d's intention.

In this week's Parsha, G-d destroyed His world because it had become perverted. The natural boundaries separating one species from the next had become obscured. Cross breeding was rampant, incest and adultery were accepted as alternative life choices, and personal properties and rights were defenseless before a philosophical onslaught of "might makes right". Murder and thievery were commonplace and were the determining factor in the balance of personal wealth and power.

In a world devoid of respect for individual differences and rights there can be no G-d. Just as belief in G-d demands that we study, accept, and respect G-d's established demarcations in order to understand His intended purposes, so too, the erasing of those differences denies G-d's place within the universe. Therefore, in the pre-Mabul (diluvian) era, idol worship was rampant as everyone and anyone claimed divine rights and prerogative.

A few years ago, my Father Shlit'a shared with me a beautiful insight into the story of Noach and the building of the Tayvah - Ark. In 6:16, G-d instructed Noach to put a "Tzoar" in the roof of the Tayvah. Rashi references the Medresh that translates Tzoar as either a window or a large precious gem. The construction of a window to provide air and light makes sense. The notion of framing a large gem in the roof of the Tayvah does not make much practical sense. For what possible reason would G-d have wanted a gem embedded in the roof of the Tayvah? I always thought that it was meant to function as a skylight to refract and magnify the light coming into the Tayvah; however, even that explanation lacks practical plausibility.

My Father Shlit'a suggested the following explanation. The Talmud is not suggesting that it was an either or situation, either a window or a gem. In truth, both opinions assume that there was a window. However, the source that translates Tzoar as a gem assumes that there was also a window. The question is, why did G-d insist on placing a gem in addition to a window?

My Father pointed out that a gem would act like a prism for whatever light passed through its crystals or facets. As such, the gem would break down the white light into the 7 colors of the prism casting a rainbow of colors into the Tayvah - Ark. G-d's intention was for the survivors of the Mabul and the progenitors of the new world to have a constant reminder of the uniqueness and complexity

of that which otherwise appears simple and commonplace. It was essential for Noach and his sons to recognize and respect the inherent differences, both subtle and obvious, that G-d had established in creation. The colors of the prism cast on the floor and walls of the Tayvah were a constant reminder that the obvious and the common often mask the unique and the individual. The downfall of pre-diluvian humanity was their disregard for differences and the obscuring of G-d's intent and purpose. The hope for future humanity was their recognition and acceptance of those divine demarcations and the revealing of G-d's intent.

It now makes sense why G-d chose the rainbow as His reminder to humanity of the Mabul - Great Flood. In the aftermath of a rain, the colors of the rainbow stretched across the blue expanse of the sky reminds humanity that it is our obligation to seek out, cherish, and respect the differences inherent in nature. It reminds us that it is within those differences that G-d is to be found.

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