

## TWO RIGHTOUS MEN

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In this week's portion of the Bible we read how G-d destroyed the world for its wickedness ויהי המבול ארבעים יום על הארץ, And there was a flood for forty days on the earth. וימח את כל היקום אשר על פני האדמה And He destroyed every living substance which was upon the face of the earth.

I have often pondered over the question: Why is it that Abraham is considered as one of the pillars of the Jewish people — one of our אבות our founding fathers, whereas נח to whom G-d also revealed Himself, plays an insignificant role in the development of our glorious history. Furthermore, some of our sages go so far as to characterize Noah נח, in a derogatory manner. They take a dim view of Noah's piety, in the light of the life of Abraham. What clues did our sages have which justified them to take such a critical view? Where do we find evidence in the Torah that will confirm such a belief? On the contrary do we not find that Noah was a firm believer in G-d? Do we not find that את אלקים התהלך נח "Noah walked with G-d? How did Abraham win the everlasting recognition of the Jewish people while Noah is considered among those who contributed little to the benefit of mankind?

If there is one characteristic, that stands out above all the other fine traits that the Jewish nation possess, it is the characteristic of עם קשה עורף of being a stiff necked people. In the past merely being a Jew meant standing for a cause; fighting for something; rebelling against something. Let us examine the life of Abraham. When he was young his father sold idols. Yet, despite his youth he had the courage to destroy

those idols. For daring to say that there is no special G-d for the city of Ur or for the city of Babel, he was derided and banished from his home. They mocked when he proclaimed that there was one G-d above all of us. Yet Abraham stood for his ideals. Here was a man that couldn't be bribed or bullied into compromising his convictions. When Abraham saw that the neighbors around him were forsaking the very fundamentals of human decency, he admonished them. Wherever he wandered, wherever he travelled, he had one thought in mind ויקרא בשם ה' He called in the name of G-d. He was not satisfied to sit back and worship G-d alone while the peoples of the earth were continuing their idol worship. Threatened with death in Egypt, suffering the privations of hunger and thirst, lacking the conveniences and security of a home, this great Jew nevertheless went from town to town, from village to village spreading the teachings of G-d.

Surely Abraham could have had an easier life. I am sure that he would have been more accepted in his community if he had not criticized them so severely. But then, that wouldn't have been Abraham. Yes, he might have had an easier life, but not a happy life. For how could Abraham look with apathy when injustices were being perpetrated? When his nephew Lot was kidnapped by the ruthless king Nimrod and his allies, he immediately mobilized his insignificant 318 soldiers to battle the thousands that Nimrod possessed. That was Abraham — ready to fight for a cause no matter how great the odds might be.

But what were the results of Abraham's endeavors? How successful was Abraham in converting the heathens?

The Torah tells us that this grand patriarch captured the minds and hearts of his followers to such an extent that

## R A D I O M E S S A G E S

his own son Isaac was willing to sacrifice himself for G-d. His sincerity in his belief convinced many to accept G-d as the **בחרן** "The converted souls in Haron." At first he found the going difficult for him. One day he would be ridiculed. Another day he would be scoffed at, and another time he would be doubted. But day by day, month by month as he was hammering away, people began to listen to him. Success does not come easily. No new ideas or new innovations are immediately accepted by the masses. History has taught us that years go by until social reform can be brought to realization. Here in the United States only fifty years ago, labor unions were considered radical and social security was considered socialism, whereas today they have been accepted as part of the American way of life even by the most conservative elements of our country.

Finally Abraham was rewarded by G-d by being called **אברהם**. והיה שמך אברהם כי אב המון גוים נתתיך.  
"And thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee." Now the world realized the greatness in him. Everyone was aware of his sincerity of purpose. Truth had won over falsehood. G-dliness had triumphed over paganism. He had planted a seed that would sprout for many years. Furthermore he imbued that same fighting spirit in his children for generations to come.

And so it has been throughout our long history. The standard of rebellion raised by Abraham has been constantly held aloft by our people. When the whole world worshipped Caesar as a G-d, we alone denied his divinity.

When Greece imposed pagan duties on all mankind, Judah Hamacabee and a handful of Hebrews defied pagan worship. I can cite numerous illustrations. We were always

## TORAH & SERMON MANUAL

rebelling against whatever we believed was contrary to our principals. We always kept the convictions of our courage. We always inspired others to follow our example. When one knows that he stands for something significant, then he knows it is a cause worth fighting for.

Now let us examine the life of Noah. We find no evidence of a man interested in the activities of his fellowmen. When the earth was engulfed in violence, where was Noah? Why was Noah silent when mankind followed the dictates of their hearts rather than the dictates of their conscience? Why did he not protest the brutality and corruption of his neighbors? True he was pious. True he was G-d fearing.

את אלקים התהלך נח Noah walked with G-d. For that he was assured of safety when the מַבּוּל, the flood, destroyed the rest of humanity. But what about his neighbors, his friends? Were they not the children of G-d? Were they not worth saving? Why did he not wander from town to town warning them of the impending disaster? Why was he satisfied only to save himself and his family when he knew that soon the earth would be destroyed. It is true that to disagree with popular notions would have brought ridicule. It is also true that to oppose mass hysteria might have been highly dangerous. It might have been suicidal for Noah to admonish the people for their evil behavior. But that, my friends, is the criteria of greatness in the Jewish race. Whatever the consequences are, a true leader in Israel will voice his defiance at oppression. Abraham wasn't afraid to scold the powerful Avimelech by saying, רק אין יראת אלקים במקום הזה, Surely there is no fear of G-d in this place!

Moses endangered himself countless times when he defied Pharaoh. Joshua and Kaleb had the courage to disagree

## R A D I O M E S S A G E S

with the מרגלים the spies, when they brought back a pessimistic report concerning the feasibility of conquering Canaan. Had not the glory of G-d intervened, Joshua and Kaleb would have been stoned. Yet they were not afraid to voice their dissent. The same was true with מרדכי Mordecai and Rabbi Akiva. Our true leaders always strove to disseminate the knowledge of the sacred writings and the high ideals and truth enshrined in our ancient Torah. They all felt it their duty to awaken the Jewish conscience which lies dormant in the heart of every Jew. To consolidate the oneness of Israel, to plead for Jewish solidarity and to reaffirm the ancient formula of "All Israel is one."

And what were the results of Noah in not alarming the people of the imminent danger. What were the consequences of Noah's not interceding in behalf of his fellowmen. We read וישאר אך נח Noah remained alone. Noah was left without friends, without pupils, without followers. How frightening it must have been for Noah to witness the destruction of the world knowing that he and his family were the only survivors. He can be compared to a captain of a ship who is saved while the entire crew and passengers drown.

Noah remained alone and isolated. What a contrast to Abraham.

My friends, the reason why there has been a decline of true Judaism the past fifty years is because we had too many Noah's and not enough people of the calibre of Abraham. It is true that we had pious Jews — Jews that did not deviate one iota from what was handed down on Mt. Sinai.

But they lacked the spirit to renunciate, to oppose and repudiate alien influences that were creeping in on our traditional heritage. Not only did they not combat the enemy

## TORAH & SERMON MANUAL

from without, but in addition, they neglected to oppose the vigorous attacks that were made upon them by their so called friends, by their own flesh and blood, by their own coreligionist. They remained indifferent when attempts were made to save Judaism by removing from it all of its test, when inroads were made on the very fundamentals of our belief.

Some of these even used that false excuse of not wishing to break harmony of the synagogue or not wanting to spread dissention among the Jewish population. They did not know that it took two world wars to show that appeasement and compromise in the final analysis, prove even more costly and fruitless.

And alas today modern Noah's like the Noah of Old, find themselves alone. The synagogues are empty, services are meaningless and lifeless, and their children have long ago deserted them. They are reaping what they themselves have sowed. They have learned the hard way, that Judaism is a tradition that evolved from the inner soul of the Jewish people, and that it will not be strengthened by giving up principals and traditions even if they may not perhaps agree with modern ideas. Therefore I call upon all those who have G-d in their heart to take part in the rebirth of true Judaism which is spreading throughout the United States.

Manifest your loyalty to G-d and your devotion to your people by proclaiming and fighting for the principals of our Torah. Support those that have dedicated their lives to the spreading and teaching of our vast and rich heritage. We must struggle against those who wish to place their sacreligious hands upon our inheritance. We must again recall and emulate Abraham in his struggle against the prophets of false ideas.

## TORAH & SERMON MANUAL

We have learned how to die for our principals. My friends, we must learn how to live for our principals.

We have a cause to live for — a destiny to fight for. Let us live for it. Let us fight for it. The choice is ours — Noah or Abraham. Let it be *מי לה' אלהי*, whoever is for G-d, join us.