

Parshat Noach: The Ark

G-d said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery through them; and behold I am about to destroy them from the earth. Make for yourself an Ark of gopher wood; make the Ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch."

Rabbi Eliyahu HaCohen Munk Z'L astutely points out that the word "Teivah" (translated to be an ark) only appears twice in the Torah. It appears in the Parsha of Noah and again in Exodus 2:3 to designate the wicker basket which protected Moshe and kept him from drowning in the Nile. Rabbi Munk writes, "In both cases, the Teivah plays the same role, it saves a redeemer from death; the redeemer of humanity and the redeemer of the chosen people." The concept of a Teivah saving humanity and eventually the Jewish People has been G-d's way of protecting the Shechina(translated as G-d's Presence) on earth.

Just as a human being treasures his most valuable possessions, so G-d treasures His most valuable assets on earth. Just as a human being locks his jewels in a safe, G-d places his precious ones like Noah and Moshe in a Teivah- in a confined space. The Netivot Shalom(The Slonimer Rebbe Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky,Z'L) compares the Ark of Noah to the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). The Shechina rests in the Holy Temple and specifically in another circumscribed space the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Kodesh Kedashim). The Netivot Shalom says that just as the Teivah of Noah had three compartments so too did the Beit HaMikdash-1)the Azara, 2)the Heichal, 3)the Kodesh Kedashim.

The Ark of Noah was the blueprint for the Beit HaMikdash. Hashem uses structures to house the Shechina on earth. In reference to another such entity the Mishkan(Tabernacle) G-d says, "They shall make a sanctuary for Me- so that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8) Just as the Teivah of Noah enabled the Shechina to reside on earth so too the Tabernacle and the Beit HaMikdash (Rav Yitzchok Isaac Chover Z'L).This is a crucial concept. Jews pray three times each day that "May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in compassion.

Blessed are You, Hashem Who restores His Presence (Shechinah) to Zion."

The Shechina of Hashem can never entirely leave the earth (although it can be withdrawn somewhat). If it was removed completely the world would cease to exist. Even when the Jews were in Exile, the Shechina was found in their Synagogue Arks, Torah Scrolls, and their Righteous ones(Tzaddikim). Now with the return of the Jewish People to Israel, the Shechina is indeed returning to Zion. Our prayers are being fulfilled.

The Ark of Noah is now the Land of Israel and ultimately will be the Beit Hamikdash-hopefully speedily in our day. In memory to Chaya Chava Bat Rav Yehoshua HaKohen and Rafael Ben Zalman Yehuda. Chodesh Tov and Shabbat Shalom