

## Only Noach survived, and those with him in the Ark. (7:23)

*Rashi* quotes *Chazal*, who teach that Noach survived, but was physically spent. Alternatively, he was injured by the lion. Apparently, each animal had its individual feeding time. Noach was once late in feeding the lion, who did not take kindly to having to wait for his dinner. When Noach arrived late, the lion took out its anxiety on him with a powerful slap of the paw. Life was not easy for the human beings who comprised Noach's passenger list. Their involvement with providing *chesed*, kindness, to the animals led Avraham *Avinu* to realize the significance of such acts of *chesed*. He made a *kal v'chomer*, statement of *a priori* logic: If performing *chesed* with animals is so important, how much more so should one act kindly to human beings. This motivated him to establish his famous *eshel*, welcome center, providing rest, relaxation and sustenance to travelers.

*Chazal* say that Noach and his sons hardly slept during that difficult year traveling on the Ark. Did it have to be that way? Why did Hashem not arrange it that all of the feeding times for the animals coincide, so that they would all eat at one time? This way, it would be humanly impossible to feed them, and Noach and his sons could sleep in feedings. Was it really necessary for them to extend themselves to the point of superhuman exhaustion?

**Horav Zeidel Epstein, zl**, explains that the story of Noach is all about *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure. The people of that generation sinned in a manner which indicated that they cared solely about themselves. They acted in complete opposition to the rule of *olam chesed yibaneh*, the world is built on (acts of) lovingkindness. Hashem created a world with the intention that its inhabitants would conduct themselves by caring for one another. He left no place in this world for selfish people.

Thus, the only way the people were able to survive the Flood was by adopting acts of *chesed* as a way of life. Especially during the year of Flood, when the *Middas HaDin*, Attribute of Divine Justice, prevailed throughout the world, the only means of surviving was counteracting it with acts of goodness and kindness. *Middas HaDin* demanded punishment for the lack of *chesed*. Noach and his sons could not let up for a moment, or they would fall prey to the effects of *Din*. Nonstop kindness was the only antidote to the Justice that was being meted out against society.