

Go forth from the Ark, you and your wife. (8:16)

Chazal teach that when Noach emerged from the Ark to find a world destroyed, he complained to Hashem: “You should have shown mercy on Your children.” Hashem replied, “Foolish shepherd, you should have spoken up before I destroyed the world.” Clearly, *Chazal’s* words are laden with profound wisdom and numerous lessons. One message that Hashem’s words immediately impart addresses the need to care for others. Noach knew that a flood would occur. He seemed to be concerned for himself and his family. At the end of his journey, when he perceived the scope of the devastation, it hit home that the flood might have been averted. He immediately blamed Hashem, which is standard fare for anyone who refuses to accept any responsibility. Hashem rebutted that Noach woke up too late. He should have defended his generation before the fact. Now it was too late. Hashem implied that Noach’s sole concern was for himself and his family. He neglected to express his distress concerning the rest of his generation.

We all have a moral obligation to care for others. *V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*; “Love your fellow as (you love) yourself” is the rule of life by which we should all live. If something is not right with my fellow, then, by extension, something is not right with me. My life may not/cannot go on with business as usual if my fellow is undergoing an experience which is taking its toll on him. We are all one collective being. We must feel the pain of others and act upon it, because their pain is our pain.

In a lecture to a large group of post-seminary students who had already entered into the matrimonial chapter of life, *Rav* Nochum Diamont posed the following question: “When you meet a prospective young man, what is the question that is uppermost in your mind?” They all answered, “Is he *matim*, suitable, for me?” He continued, “Clearly, all of you are concerned primarily for yourselves, since no one replied, ‘Am I suitable for him?’” Having said this, he continued with the following hypothetical situation: “You marry, and shortly thereafter you discover that your husband has a condition that does not allow him to tolerate air conditioning. You, on the other hand, cannot breathe in a stuffy room. Now what?” The girls presented various responses: “He should sleep with a blanket over his head, so that he will not feel the draft.” This selfish reply was followed by many others – all of which indicated that these young women were clueless concerning the harmony and caring for one another that must permeate a marriage. Each was more focused on herself than her spouse. This, explained the *Rav*, was a recipe for disaster.

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 20) teach that in the generation of Rabbi Yehudah bar Elai, the poverty among the students was so great that six students shared one *tallis*/blanket covering. *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, explains how six could possibly be covered by one blanket. Each one cared for his fellow; thus, he pushed the blanket toward the other student. Since each one of the six was pushing away from himself, his friend was covered. Had it been the other way around, with each one pulling toward himself, the blanket would have quickly been torn to shreds.