

Thinking of Others – Being a Part of the Klal Light unto the Nations

As we approach *Pashas Noach*, the question one could ask is how come the Jewish people did not begin with *Noach* but instead with Avrohom. The answer that is given by many commentators is the following. *Noach* was truly a righteous person. As described by the *pasuk*, he was a *tzadik*; he was a *tamim*; he was a righteous person. However, what do we learn from *Noach's* behavior? He saved himself and his family but no one else. More than that, nowhere is it stated that *Noach* davened for his generation. All he did was build the *tayvah* and as people walked by he told them what he was doing and what would happen, but he wasn't proactive in trying to help them change their thinking and behavior. On the other hand, we find that even for the wicked people of *Sodom*, *Avraham davened* for them and pleaded with *Hashem* on their behalf that maybe there was a way *Hashem* could save them.

The essence of a Jew is understanding that the Jewish people are not selfish. We do not only think of what's good for ourselves and our family. Rather, we think of others, of everyone around us, of the entire *klal*. Avrohom initiated this behavior. He recognized that as the *light unto the nations*, the Jewish people's role is to be the mentor for spiritual and moral guidance for the entire world. Moreover, if people aren't willing to listen, it remains our ethical duty to *daven* for them in the hopes that their behavior will change.

This is a beautiful lesson to teach to our children. We need to teach them not only to share but to think of others. This reminds me of a story that occurred when I was an 8th grade *Rebbe* at Arie Crown Hebrew Day School trying to teach my class this concept. In hopes of making this idea more meaningful for them, I gave each of the boys an index card with a classmate's name on it and told them to put that card in their *tefillin* bag and to think of the boy whose name was on the card when they were davening. One day something very special happened. The boys were davening and davening for each other when one of the sixteen boys in the class raised his hand and asked, "*Rebbe*, we're all davening for each other, but who is davening for you?" I remember that moment, being so touched that this child really got the message – it's about thinking of others, not just thinking of one's self.

May we be able to emulate this message to our children so as they grow, they will understand the importance of being advocates for the entire *klal* and not just for themselves and their families.