

Secrets of Noah’s Ark

Handout for Class 4: The Ecosystem of the Ark

1. In Gen. 6:16, G-d instructed Noah that the Ark must have three levels. In his explanation of this verse, Rashi says, "Three stories one on top of the other. The top for the human beings, the middle for sections (for the animals), the bottom for refuse." Thus, the top deck of the Ark was only used by the eight people, but the text of Genesis does not mention how all of the extra space was used. It must have contained the food supply, but what can we assume about that space?

The following translation of a talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe sheds light for us on that question (excerpted from: http://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2553820/jewish/Eve-of-12th-of-Sivan-5742-1982.htm with explanations in brackets added by Dr. Schulman):

Why did the princes [of the 12 Jewish tribes in the wilderness of Sinai] donate only *six* covered wagons — one wagon from two princes [for the dedication of the Mishkan (the Tabernacle)]? Could not each one have donated a single wagon himself without having to share half the cost with a fellow prince? They surely had the means to do so... And they certainly had the required generosity — as we see that even the ordinary people were so generous that they donated all the Mishkan’s requirements in two days.

In addition, the purpose of the wagons was “that they may be of service to the work of the Ohel Moed [the Tent of Meeting];’ two wagons being given to the sons of Gershon to carry the curtains etc., and the remaining four being given to the [Levite] sons of Merrori to carry the boards (and the pillars and sockets). There were 48 boards in the Mishkan, which means that each wagon carried 12 boards (besides the pillars and sockets). According to the Talmud’s explanation of the way the boards were loaded on the wagons — consonant to the length and width of the wagons and boards — (some of) the boards were of necessity stacked one on top of each other. If the princes would have each donated a wagon, the boards could have been laid on the wagons without being stacked one on top of the other. Why then did the princes go halves in the wagons?

... [The lesson is that] when one utilizes something [in the service of G-d], it must be *totally* utilized. Nothing must be left unutilized, for if not, the non-utilized things are wasted. G-d also acts in this way, as stated [Isaiah 45:18], “G-d did not create anything in this world for naught; [He formed it to be settled.]” [1]

Since G-d did not create anything for naught, this concept was also expressed in the Mishkan, **the place where G-d’s Presence was revealed.**[2] Since each wagon *could* carry twelve boards, then, if they would only carry 6 (if the princes would each donate one wagon), only half of the wagon’s potential would be used, and the other half wasted. Therefore, despite the fact that each prince would have been willing and eager to donate a wagon by himself, the realization that the Mishkan had to be perfect prevented them from donating extra wagons which would have caused wastage — the antithesis of perfection.

There is a wonderful lesson to be learned from this in our service to G-d. Before one starts the individual service of each day, the general lesson in regards to the method of service is that one must utilize fully all one’s abilities. Obviously then, one cannot rely upon another’s service [to take his place], for one’s soul was sent below to fulfill G-d’s mission — and one must utilize the abilities given by G-d through one’s *own* service.

Added notes:

¹ This Divine purpose for the world is primarily accomplished through Gentile individuals and societies accepting and following the Seven Noahide Commandments.

² During the Flood, the place where G-d’s Presence was revealed was in the Ark, so the same principle applies to it.

2. The spiritual revelation that was present in the Ark was on the level of the future Messianic Era. It affected the very nature of the animals on the Ark, who dwelled together peacefully, and ate as herbivores, in the manner that was prophesied in Isaiah 11:6-7 about the Messianic Era. Therefore, we can assume that this spiritual revelation also affected the crops that Noah planted on the top deck of the Ark. Regarding the crops that will grow in the Messianic Era, it is written in Tractate *Kesubot* 111b, " there will be a time [in the Messianic Era] when... a grain of wheat will be as large as the two kidneys of a big bull... in the World to Come a man will bring one grape on a wagon or a ship, put it in a corner of his house and use its contents as a large wine cask... There will be no grape that will not contain thirty kegs of wine...