

Dvar Torah for Parshat Noach

Based on *The Aleph-Bet Book*

One who fails to pray for compassion on behalf of his fellow human being falls into captivity. The *tikun* (correction) for captivity is to provide for animals.
Redeeming Captives B:3

"God remembered Noach...and spread compassion over the earth and the waters subsided" (*Genesis* 8:1). What did Noach do that God began again to act with compassion? Noach provided for the animals (*Bereishis Rabbah* 33:3).

A simple act - opening one's mouth to ask God to have compassion on a fellow human being, even a stranger. A little "fine tuning" and the prayer can include dozens of people, a whole nation, all of mankind. Failing to produce some words leads to captivity. One does not get out of jail free. One must spend time, energy and money providing for animals.

Anyone who has lived on a farm, or owned a pet, knows that animals have their needs, needs that have to be met on schedule. Forget to feed the goldfish for a few days and it'll float to the top. Be unavailable to take the dog for a walk and the house will get a little messy. You have to pay attention. In order to pay attention, you have to realize that you play a critical role in another being's life. In order to realize that, you have to realize that lives other than yours have value - that others have lives.

And that they have needs, desires and feelings, just like you have. That they, like you, can't do it all. That they, like you, need a prayer. People often do not pray for themselves because not always do they realize the difficulties of their situation. Even if they do, they can't always get themselves out (*Berakhot* 5b).

How does the punishment fit the crime? Captivity is not only "serving time" in a Bastille-like structure. "Captivity" can be being confined to one's home or being "imprisoned" in bed due to illness, God forbid. "Captivity" is also being trapped within one's own mind, unable to make progress on one's spiritual path. Sometimes one cannot take the next step because one mistsinks that he cannot meet the challenge or because he does not know what the next step is. Worst of all, one may not take the next step because he thinks he has already arrived.

One who is so captive to his own life such that he can't take others into account, falls further into captivity.

So, please feed the animals - and pray for others.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

Noach failed to pray for his generation (*Zohar Chadash* 29a).
Noach's being in the Ark was akin to being in prison (*Bereishis Rabbah* 32:8 and 49:2).

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