



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

NO'ACH

Patronising Outreach

No'ach is described in the famous words, NO'ACH ISH TZADIK, TAMIM HAYA B'DOROTAV; ET HA-ELOKIM HIT-HALEICH NO'ACH - "No'ach was a righteous man, wholehearted in his generations; No'ach walked with God" (B'reishit 6:9).

The sages regarded Abraham as a greater tzadik: where No'ach walked with God, Abraham walked before God (24:40).

There is an analogy: as a young child walks with its parent, but an older child is trusted enough to walk a little ahead of the parent, so No'ach was not yet as morally mature as Abraham was.

There is another comparison, according to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev.

One type of tzadik is devoted to God and to human beings, but another type is devoted to God and not so much to humans.

The second type is No'ach, who for all

his piety is too ready to give up on other people.

The first type is Avraham, who never ceases to endeavour to bring his contemporaries to God. Avraham and his wife Sara dedicated their lives to what today is called outreach; No'ach gave up and settled for safety in the ark and the hope that a new day would dawn.

Both types are alive and well in our own day; some say, "Let me at least preserve my own and my family's religious standards", whereas others keep on trying to bring their contemporaries under the proverbial wings of the Divine Presence.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, if he were alive today, might suggest that there are two types of the Avraham model.

Some follow an outreach method which comes on rather too heavy, being a little too superior and patronising. Others work more subtly, by example rather than what looks like propaganda. Both seek the same goal, but one is more gentle and constructive.

Baruch HaShem, both bring new strength to Judaism, but there are valid ethical questions about how best to pursue the goal.

A White-Faced Sin

"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (B'reishit 9:6)
- there is no doubt about it: murder is wrong, and its punishment is severe.

Though later generations were reluctant to apply the full force of the law by imposing the death penalty, our revulsion against murder is undiminished.

There is a second level on which the law applies. The Talmud says, HAMALBIN P'NEI CHAVERO BARABIM, EIN LO CHELEK LA'OLAM HABA - "One who publicly shames a fellow human being has no place in the World to Come" (Bava Metzia 59a). Literally HAMALBIN P'NEI CHAVERO means, "One who makes a person's face white." By shaming a person publicly so that the blood drains from their face and they become deathly white, you lose your place in the World to Come.

Insulting or gravely embarrassing another person is not literally murder, but you have destroyed their reputation and dignity and the punishment is severe. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH