

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT NOACH

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WOULD YOU STAND OUT FROM EVERYONE ELSE?



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Imagine everyone around you is doing something they know is wrong. Your friends are joining in, nobody seems concerned, and speaking up would mean being the only person who refuses to go along with it.

Would you have the confidence to be different?

This is one of the challenges at the heart of this week's parasha, *Noach*.

The Torah tells us:

"Noach ish Tzadik, tamim hayah bedorotav".

"Noach (Noah) was a righteous

man; he was faultless in his generation." (*Bereishit* 6:9)

But why does the Torah add "*Bedorotav* – in his generation"?

Rashi (1045-1105) gives two interpretations. The first praises Noach: he remained righteous despite living in a society filled with corruption, violence and theft. If he had lived among better people, Rashi suggests, he might have become even greater.

The second interpretation is more critical. Perhaps Noach only appeared especially righteous compared with the people around him. Had he lived in the generation of Avraham (Abraham), one of the greatest figures in Jewish history, he might not have seemed so remarkable.

These two interpretations leave us with an important question: how should we judge ourselves?

It is admirable to resist negative influences, but simply being better than the people around us should not be enough. Judaism challenges us to develop our own standards rather than allowing the crowd to set them.

For us, this might mean refusing to join in when others are putting someone down or having the confidence to say 'no' when 'everyone else is doing it' is the most comfortable approach.

Noach therefore teaches us two lessons: have the courage to stand apart from the crowd and never use the crowd as the standard for how good you can become.

Help the dove find Noah's Ark!

