

Good Shabbos Everyone. The verse tells us that "These are the offspring of Noach, Noach was a righteous man..." (Bereishis 6:9) Why does the Torah double the word "Noach?" Why not just say "These are the offspring of Noach, a righteous man...?"

The answer is the following: The verse tells us that Noach was called "Noach"- which means 'relaxed' or 'tranquil', because Noach was a righteous man. We reread the verse above to mean "These are the offspring of Noach, [who was] "Noach" - relaxed [because he] was a righteous man..." We will see that those who uphold the Torah generally live more relaxed lives.

Noach distinguished himself in his generation as a righteous person who listened to Hashem. As the verses tell us "Noach walked with Hashem..."(Bereishis 6:9) "And Noach did according to everything Hashem had commanded him." (Bereishis 7:5)

On the merit of listening to Hashem, Noach's ark "drifted upon the surface of the waters." (Bereishis 7:18) While the world was destroyed, Noach floated peacefully on the water. Noach walked with Hashem, so Hashem only gave Noach the plans to build the ark, which saved Noach and his family. Therefore, we see that Noach lived a peaceful life because he followed Hashem's word. By following the example of Noach, who listened to Hashem, we too can learn to float over life's difficulties and live virtually stress free lives.

The following amazing true story shows how one Jew managed to float through a particularly difficult period in Jewish history. Almost 30 years ago, Mordechai Shababo was a typical secular Israeli who lived with his family in Tzefas, in northern Eretz Yisroel. Mordechai had been training hard as a wrestler for the 1972 world competitions, which were to take place in Munich, Germany.

Mordechai was the only real hope for bringing home a victory for the Israeli team. Although Mordechai himself was not an observant Jew, his family had a long and illustrious history in the religious community of Tzefas. An ancestor of Mordechai was Reb Yehoshua Shababo, who had been a student of the Arizal, some 400 years previous. Mordechai's father was a member of the local Chevra Kadisha along with being a Shammas at the famous Alshich Shul.

The holy Alshich (1508 - 1593?) was a pious scholar and rabbinical judge who had lived, taught and was later buried in Tzefas. Mordechai's father was responsible for the upkeep of the Alshich shul, which was next to the Alshich's grave. For a few days in the summer of 1972, Mordechai's father was unable to carry out his duties in the shul. The older Mr. Shababo therefore requested that his son Mordechai take care of the Alshich shul in his place. At first, Mordechai wanted to refuse his father's request, because the world competitions in Germany were quickly approaching.

However, something inside Mordechai's heart told him to help his father. Mordechai agreed to take care of the Alshich shul for a few days in his father's stead. One night, a couple of days later, Mordechai had a dream. The holy Alshich appeared to him, wearing all white. The scholar thanked Mordechai for making the shul so bright and clean, however, the saintly Rav added: "But where I lie, it is dark, filthy and neglected so that no one can approach my grave."

Mordechai woke up the next morning somewhat disturbed by the dream. However, Mordechai did not act on the Alshich's request to clean up the grave. But when the same dream occurred twice more over the next few nights, Mordechai became very alarmed. Mordechai's wife insisted that he do something about the grave of the holy Alshich.

Mordechai wanted to wait until after he returned from the world competitions in Munich. But Mordechai's wife insisted. So, 48 hours before the Israeli team was set to leave for the competitions, Mordechai hastily withdrew from the team, claiming that he was not feeling well. The team tried everything including bribery to force Mordechai to take part in the competitions. Mordechai, however, refused to join the team.

As his former team members boarded the plane for Germany, Mordechai was already busy cleaning up the grave of the holy Alshich in Tzefas. Several days later, news of the horrible tragedy in Munich reached Mordechai. Mordechai, along with the rest of the Jewish world was shocked by the report. When he heard the news, Mordechai realized that the Hand of Hashem was upon him. He was spared from the tragedy in the merit of the saintly Alshich, of blessed memory. Mordechai began to become more and more Torah observant. His day began to revolve around the Alshich shul, where he prayed three times a day. Using his phenomenal strength, the wrestler Mordechai moved the heavy obstacles, which had blocked access to the cave where the grave of the Alshich was situated. After sixth months of backbreaking labor, Mordechai completed his restoration of the Alshich's gravesite. Over the last 28 years, Mordechai has continued his holy work in maintaining several gravesites of tzaddikim in Tzefas. All of Mordechai's work is for the sake of heaven, for he receives no payment for his services. Today Mordechai lives a fully religious lifestyle with his family in Tzefas. (Jewish Tribune, [England] 08/24/00 p.4 Letters, R'M.Roberg)

Mordechai Shababo was able to ride out the tragedies which occurred in that horrible summer of 1972. Although Mordechai was distraught at the deaths of his teammates, Mordechai was able to recognize the amazing Hasgacha Pratis (divine providence) which led to his decision not to travel with the team to Germany.

Mordechai, like Noach was able to float peacefully above the destruction which rocked the world. By listening to Hashem's mitzvahs, we too can have peace of mind. Noach was "Noach" - relaxed, because he followed Hashem's word. Once we realize that Hashem is watching over us, we will naturally live more relaxed lives. We will be less subject to the ups and downs of every day life. Instead, we will have the inner peace of knowing that Hashem is our Father and Keeper. Let us therefore strive to follow Hashem righteously and then we will be better able to float over life's difficulties. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**