

***“Calm Down, Everything Is Going to Be Alright”***  
***Rosh Hodesh Heshvan / October 29, 2011***  
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Often as a young child I was extremely active, very enthusiastic and at times bursting with energy. Time and again my parents would say the same two words to me, which would only wind me up even more. Although I'm sure that this was not their intent. Just two words had the capacity to completely change my joyful exuberance into an even more upset child by having the opposite effect and making things worse. However, the reality was these words were offered by my parents as sage wisdom from a life of disappointments and difficulties. They were suggested out of a desire to help me gain perspective and insight. It was also a means of self preservation for them while trying to deal with a red headed-Scorpio who possessed an overabundance of enthusiasm. Somehow these two words just did not have their intended or desired effect and today, even as an adult, I watch how these same two words can negatively impact others, although again, this is usually not the intent. Have you figured them out?

They are “calm down.” “Calm down,” when heard mistakenly, can be infuriating. “Calm down” usually translates as “be quiet.” and not in a good way although these words can be great advice when delivered in the appropriate manner. You see, “calm down” is really positive instruction and actually infers for one to find inner peace, gain some much-needed perspective and re-evaluate feelings. Unfortunately, it is usually heard as, “You are out of control or you have lost your mind.” “Calm down,” should be heard with a gentle caress of the soul – not as “Don't be so passionate.” The addendum cliché of “cooler heads prevail” isn't always or necessarily true, but both speak in this context to a relationship with another. I believe “calm down” is purely internal and more about self-preservation than about the saving of a relationship.

Today these two words are very appropriate. In recent weeks alone, our own community has fallen victim to a great deal of violence, suicide and murder. Additionally, our nation has fallen victim to nerve-wracking tension while anger begins to mount between the “Occupy Wall Street Movement” and our law enforcement. Our world today has grown ever-anxious as dictators are overthrown and then hunted down. In fact, lawlessness seems to prevail in a number of places across the globe. Today it seems like we are in a very similar moment as described in this week's Torah reading, “*v'timaleh ha'aretz hamas,*” a world filled with hatred – and that is why God sends the world Noah.

There is so much attention paid to Noah, his character and his name. Was he righteous or just good enough? Was he a person who saved humanity and all of animal life or just a guy who did what he was told? We should note that Noah delivered many benefits to life and living. Was he a great builder or just a man with a hammer under the careful supervision of God? In the end, there will always remain more questions than answers with regard to any person in the Torah. We could ask similar questions of Moses or Abraham, Sarah or Rachel. All we have is what is presented by the text and the rabbis who attempt to fill in some of the blanks. Unfortunately, there is still so little to go on. This week we get both a clue and hope from a father in Noah's story – a story which began in last week's portion.

“And Lamech was a 182 years old when he had a son: and he gave him the name of Noah, saying, ‘Truly, he will give us rest from our troubles and the hard work of our hands, because we are of the earth, which was cursed by God.’” (5:28-29) (page 32 *Etz Hayim* Humash) The operative word in this sentence is a play on Noah's Hebrew name which means, “to comfort.” It was based on the idea that Lamech was overwhelmed by the work it took to make a living – a punishment that dates back to

Adam in a story linked by the text of the Torah with a direct lineage dating back ten generations. Just as Noah is connected to Abraham, Adam is connected to Noah. The stories are interconnected and destinies become interwoven. Lemech believes he can break the cycle by just naming his son, but the truth is, he got it wrong and what he wanted was misguided. The truth in life lies not in what your parents thought you were meant to be, it lies in what you were meant to be. It doesn't matter what your parents named you, it matters the name you make for yourself.

The Rabbis say Noah got his name [as is pointed out on the bottom of page 32 above the line and on the middle of page 33 in the *Etz Hayim* Humash,] from his agricultural genius which innovated the way people worked with the ground, yielding higher produce with less effort. However, they were just reading Lemach's dream, not Noah's. You see, Noah's name really means "to rest, to find calm." It is something we all want, it is something we all crave and it is the essential ingredient to life's purposeful living. It is the way you find what your passion is and it is critical to finding what you love. Noah wasn't about making his life easier, Noah was about building something himself that would save life, that would restart a world gone wrong – and he had plenty of time to think about it because of all those hours building and all of those hours sitting adrift on a boat.

There is a wonderful story that I am sure you have all heard. A man is caught in a flood, and as the water rises the emergency police and firemen come by to evacuate the man. He tells them he will be fine and that it is in God's hands. Then a helicopter flies by and offers the man a line. The man turns to the pilot and says, "I will be fine, I have absolute faith in God and He will save me." The waters continue to rise and then a boat comes by and the man refuses one last time again proclaiming his absolute faith in the Almighty – and then he drowns. In a meeting with God he has the audacity to ask God why he did not save him. To which God responds, "I sent the police and firefighters, I sent a helicopter and finally, I sent a boat." To Noah and humanity, God sent a boat. Sometimes God sends a boat.

In 2005 at Stanford University, Steve Jobs tells the following story in what just might become the most popular address in modern culture:

I was lucky. I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz and I started Apple in my parents' garage when I was just 20 years old. We worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company with over 4000 employees. A year earlier, we had just released our finest creation, the Macintosh. I had just turned 30 – and then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew we hired someone who I thought was very talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so things went well. However, our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. So, at 30 I was out – and very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating.

I really didn't know what to do for a few months. I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down – that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me. I met with David Packard and Bob Noyce and tried to apologize for screwing up so badly. I was a very public failure. I even thought about running away from the Valley. However, something slowly began to dawn on me, I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected, but I was still in love. So I decided to start over.

I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and then fell in love with an amazing woman who would become my wife, Laurene. We have a wonderful family together. Pixar went on to create the world's first computer-animated feature film, *Toy Story*, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT and I returned to Apple. The technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance.

I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was terrible medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you on the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work and the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

I would like to share one last text with you. Please turn to page 236 in your Siddur – four lines down on the Hebrew side of the page and five lines down on the English side. I would like to offer the following prayer for all of us:

*Yom Menucha u'kdusha l'amcha natata avraham yagel yitzhak yiranan yaakov u'vanav yanuchu vo. Menucha ahava, menuchat emet v'emunah, menuchat shalom v'shalva v'hashket va'vecha, menucha sheleimah she at rotze bah, yakira vaneacha v'yedu ki me'iticha hi menuchatam, v'al menuchatam yakdishu et shemecha.*

“I pray we are each given a day, a day of rest and sanctity. Abraham was glad, Isaac rejoiced, Jacob and his children found rest on this day – a rest reflecting Your lavish love and true faithfulness, in peace and tranquility, contentment and quietude – a perfect rest in which You delight. May Your children acknowledge You as their source of rest and through their rest may they sanctify Your name.

May God send us a boat every week!

*Shabbat Shalom.*