

November 7, 2005

Addition to Egalitarianism lecture

There is a comment by the Midrashic Sages on a verse in the Sidra of Noah that I have always cherished, and that I believe has some relevance to the above theme.

The Torah says Noah alone survived the flood and his family in the ark remained.” אֵלֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ “And only Noah

On this, the Midrash comments that the word *akh* always comes *le'ma'et*, to denote that something is missing. What was missing in this case? A chunk of Noah! They say that Noah was feeding the animals and the lion became impatient and took a bite out of Noah's shoulder because he had tarried and not given the lion his food in time.

Noah, it seems, had an egalitarian attitude towards his non-human charges: everyone has to wait his turn no matter who he or she is. All are equal. No discrimination.

What he failed to realize is that this sometimes can be a dangerous policy. In the sense of ultimate value, the mouse and the elephant, the lion and lamb, are all equal in the sight of God. When it comes to feeding them in real life, however, you have to make provisions for inequalities. The lion *is stronger than the lamb*, the elephant is stronger than the mouse. You have to accommodate yourself to reality, and the reality is: if you don't feed the lion in time, he will eat part of your body!