

NOACH (GENESIS 6:9-11:32)**Yerachmiel's Ark**

2004 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

The size of my family has increased considerably.

While shopping for a new home this summer, I was pleasantly surprised to find that one of the houses we looked at had a small chicken coop in the back yard.

Since my father and grandfather were both chicken farmers, I was intrigued. The seller was planning to build a coop at his new home upstate and bring the chickens. However, nostalgia won over good sense. I told the seller, "I want those chickens!"

To make a long story short, I am now the proud owner of seven chickens in a coop



and eleven fish in a pond. And they all love to eat.

A few weeks ago, shortly after we moved in, I remembered a law that has something to do with this week's Torah Portion. Noah had a lot more than my additional eighteen mouths to feed. He was busy all day, every day, taking care of his floating animal kingdom. One day he was a little late feeding the lions. A bite on the leg from the lion reminded Noah not to repeat that mistake.

The Torah tells us, "*I will give grass in your field for your animals. You will eat and be satisfied.*" (Deuteronomy, 11:15) Note the mention of animal food before human food. We learn from this verse that one is obligated to feed his animals before he feeds himself.

For most of my life, this law was only theoretical in nature. However, now that I am a "chicken farmer" (complete with an appropriately rabbinic dark suit, white shirt, and tie) I have to make sure the chickens eat before I do. Upon realizing this, I immediately went out to the coop, before leaving for synagogue services, and fed the little darlings.

The next morning, when I got up, I made myself a cup of coffee. (Sorry to disappoint whoever read my pre-Yom Kippur message.) Suddenly I remembered that I had to feed the chickens. I thought for a minute. I reasoned, "I didn't give them food yet, but they do have water. I'm not eating breakfast; I'm

drinking a cup of coffee. I am not eating before they have food, and I am not drinking before they have water!” I drank the coffee.

I finished my coffee and went out to the shack next to the coop to get the chicken feed. There was a light rain. I walked out of the shack with container full of feed, and proceeded to slip on the wet grass.

As I lay on the grass in a not-very-rabbinic muddy suit contemplating my predicament, I started laughing. Noah’s lion strikes again!

In my house, chicken feed now comes before coffee.

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

© 2004 Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz. Reprint permitted for non-commercial use with attribution to torahtalk.org.