

have a

# Nageela Shabbos

A weekly publication of **Nageela West** Joyfully Jewish Experiences

## Noah's Pokémon

by Rabbi Dani Locker

*They say "You are what you eat." If that were true, I'd be as highly caffeinated pickle. This week's Torah segment tells us what's really up.*

*There's a whole lot of noise and wetness surrounding the story of what's called 'the great flood' (although I'm sure the people in it didn't think it was so great). People don't talk much about what happened after. Noah and his family, along with all of Earth's surviving animals come out of the ark, his gigantic boat and start living their lives. But a couple of things are different. When humans first walked the planet, we were strictly vegetarian, by G-d's orders. Now, Noah was allowed to eat animals.*

*What changed? Somehow I doubt there was a loudspeaker announcement, "Hey Noah, the produce aisle is low on cucumbers, so just head on over to the deli department until our nw shipment*

*comes in." So what was it?*

*Some authorities explain that Noah had raised himself up above all other creations. While the whole world dissolved into chaotic evil, including animals, he stayed strong and good. So what? When you eat something, it gets absorbed into you. It becomes a part of your blood and bones (for example, my knees are partly jello). Plants absorb minerals. Animals eat plants. We don't have the right to transform something into an equal or lower life form, only higher. Way back before the flood humans had no right to eat animals because we hadn't done anything to raise ourselves above animals. Only after Noah could we say with confidence, "It's an honor for this creature to become a part of me."*

*There's a whole lot of meaning we can absorb from this message. The choices we make actually, really, honestly change us. They change us in a way that the world interacts differently with*

STUMP  
THE RABBI

RABBI



Hi Rabbi,

*I'm almost Bar Mitzvah and I keep hearing how I'll be able to be counted as part of ten men needed to pray. I don't get it. Why do you need other people to pray? Why ten? Can I pray alone, too?*

*Minion Man*

Dear Minion,

*Mazal tov on your upcoming Bar Mitzvah! You're absolutely right that anyone can pray alone, with or without other people. On a boat, on a train, in a box, with a fox... you get the picture. So what's the deal with a minyan (group of ten)?*

*Have you ever played in a sports league? When I was your age, my friends and I like to play baseball. Sometimes there were only four of us around, so we played 2 on 2. We had a great time, but you'd never find that in a league. Nine players are needed to really do it right. Prayers are similar. Sure we can pray alone, but if you have the right size team, with a chazzan (prayer leader) as your QB, it's better. One of the main reasons for this is because praising G-d in a larger group gives Him more honor. There are certain parts of the prayers, specifically the ones with public praise of G-d (Kaddish, Kedusha) may only be done if at*

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us. We've all been in the situation where friends are doing something we think is wrong. But it's hard to resist. What do i really gain by resisting? Nobody will know! Now imagine that by resisting you're actually transforming, you're evolving like a Pokemon. Or you can think of it like building muscle; either way it's making you a different, stronger, awesomer (there's that fake word again, i kinda like it) person.

Have A Nageela Shabbos

Rabbi Dani Locker

VERY PUNNY

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stump continued

least a minyan of ten post bar mitzvah guys are around, because it's pretty uncool to call out, "Who thinks G-d is awesome?" and have only a couple of people answer.

To make it even sweeter, we have a tradition that when one person prays alone, their prayer had better be really good, but when praying in a group, our prayers get accepted even if they're not as good. How does that work? Look at it this way: A golfer or a tennis player (yes, those are sports, too) can't afford to have a bad day. If they play well, they win. If they play poorly, bye- bye. On the other hand, a soccer, football or basketball player can afford to have a lousy day every now and then, because his teammates will carry him. We don't always have perfectly focused, intent prayer (at least, I don't), but if we pray together with a minyan, the group carries our prayers to G-d anyway.

Have an awesometastic Shabbos,  
Rabbi Locker

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