Should We Fight for the Right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness?



**#1**

**The Declaration of Independence**

… We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness …

**48 Ways to Wisdom, #33, Rabbi Noah Weinberg**

… The Jewish perspective, however, is always from the standpoint of responsibility. For example, when the Talmud discusses property damage, it always states the law in terms of "Joe is responsible to pay Bob," as opposed to “Bob has the right to collect from Joe.”

**Questions:**

* **What concerns you more - your rights or your obligations? What about people that you interact with?**
* **Do you look for a career where you will feel fulfilled, doing what you like to do, or will you choose a career where you are responding to some call, to a sense of duty?**
* **Rights and obligations are interlocked - neither is meaningful without the other. If that is true, is there any real difference which one to focus on?**

**Torah Bereishis 6:9**

*These are the generations of Noach. Noach was a righteous man; he was perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G-d.*

**Rabbi S. R. Hirsch ad loc.**

*A tzaddik (a righteous person) is one who gives everyone and everything their due. A tzaddik is objective toward everything; he looks at everything from the standpoint of his duty, and not from the standpoint of his own personal interests.*

**Questions:**

* **If you are considering to live a life of giving to others, should you be concerned that people will abuse your kindness?**
* **Is it realistic to hope to build a society based only on obligations?**

**#2**

**The Jewish Teenager's Guide to Life, R. Tatz, p. 96**

In human relationships, giving and taking can be expressed as obligations and rights.

**Question: How do you understand this statement?**

**#3**

**48 Ways to Wisdom, #33, Rabbi Noah Weinberg**

It may be difficult to fulfill obligations, but there's tremendous pleasure in getting done what has to get done.

**Questions:**

* **What could be the reason for this?**
* **In your experience, was it always pleasurable to fulfil your obligations?**
* **In your experience, when was it not pleasurable to fulfil your obligations?**

**#4**

**Rabbi Moshe Feinstein**

Just as one must donate a tenth of his money, so one should donate a tenth of his time to volunteering.

**Question: Why do people volunteer - do they have the urge to volunteer because it feels good/ they feel bad to see someone having a difficulty, or does it come from a sense of obligation?**

**#5**

**TODAY'S LEARNING MATERIAL**

**Torah Bereishis (Noach) 6:9-22**

*These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a righteous man, he was perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G-d.*

*And Noach begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.*

*Now the earth was corrupt before G-d, and the earth became full of robbery.*

*And G-d saw the earth, and behold it had become corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.*

*And G-d said to Noach, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth has become full of robbery because of them, and behold I am destroying them from the earth.*

*Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with compartments, and you shall caulk it both inside and outside with pitch.*

*And this [is the size] you shall make it: three hundred cubits the length of the ark, fifty cubits its breadth, and thirty cubits its height.*

*You shall make a skylight for the ark, and to a cubit you shall finish it to the top, and the entrance of the ark you shall place in its side; you shall make it with bottom [compartments], second story [compartments], and third story [compartments].*

*And I, behold I am bringing the flood, water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which there is the spirit of life, from beneath the heavens; all that is upon the earth will perish.*

*And I will set up My covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you and your sons, and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.*

*And of all living things of all flesh, two of each you shall bring into the ark to preserve alive with you; they shall be male and female.*

*Of the fowl after its kind and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing upon the ground after its kind; two of each shall come to you to preserve alive.*

*And you, take for yourself of every food that is eaten and gather it in to you, and it shall be for you and for them to eat.”*

*Noach did so; he did everything exactly as G-d commanded him.*

**Rabbi S. R. Hirsch on Torah Bereishis (Noach) 6:16**

*Scripture has a reason for specifying all the details and particulars of the ark, and for then stressing repeatedly that Noach did everything just as G-d commanded him. G-d's power is unlimited, and many ways are available to Him to bring about salvation. Whether the size of the ark was sufficient, and similar issues - these are considerations that we may leave aside. G-d chose one man who was to save himself, his family and the animal world; he would be able to save them and himself - only if he would do everything just as G-d commanded him. Greater is the one commanded and does than the one not commanded and does (Talmud Kiddushin 31a) is a fundamental principle in Judaism. Contrary to prevailing opinion, a person's actions have value only if they constitute the performance of G-d's Will. What a person does on the basis of his own judgement, and the like, is of secondary, uncertain importance. During the 120 years that passed between G-d's announcement to Noach and the actual onset of the flood, Noach could have done so many things: he could have built a hundred arks and so forth. Scripture's sole intent, however, is to say that Noach did exactly as G-d had commanded him; the rest he left to G-d.*

**Talmud Baba Kamma 38a**, **Kiddushin 31a**

*Greater is the one commanded and does than the one not commanded and does.*

**Questions:**

* **How do you understand this statement? In what way is such a person greater than the one who volunteers?**
* **How would you feel when:**

**a) you washed your parents’ car after they asked you to do it? or:**

**b) you washed your parents’ car because you wanted to help out?**

**c) You helped your friend who asked you for it or:**

**d) You helped your sibling who asked you for it?**

* **What *feels* better - to help others because it is your obligation, or because you want to help?**
* **What *is* better - to help others because it is your obligation, or because you want to help?**

**#6**

**Question: What's your takeaway from today's discussion?**