



NAAMAH AND THE ARK AT NIGHT

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You know the story of Noah. But have you ever heard of Naamah, his wife? This story gives you a sense of what she had to deal with for forty days and forty nights!

JEWISH CONCEPTS

In most families, naming a child takes on great significance – and pleasure! A child’s name is one of the first gifts s/he receives, and it’s one that lasts a lifetime. Naming practices vary in Jewish tradition. For some, naming a child after a family member is common and symbolic of the love felt for that person and the esteem in which that person’s character is held. Some families name a child after a living friend or family member, others in memory of a loved one. Naming practices among Ashkenazim (Jews of Central and Eastern European origin) and Sephardim (Jews of Iberian or Middle-Eastern origin) may differ. A quick on-line search can provide fascinating information about these varying practices.

Parents may also name their child according to a hoped-for trait or important value. The Hebrew name Shira, for example, means song, which might appeal to a musical family. The name Noah means “rest” or “comfort” in Hebrew, while Naamah means “pleasant.” (Perhaps surprisingly, Noah’s wife goes unnamed in the story of the ark in the first of the five books of the Torah, Genesis).

Ham (“hot” or “warm”), Shem (“name”), and Japheth (from Yefet, meaning “enlarged”) are the Hebrew names of Noah’s three sons.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Though it has no accompanying musical notes, the poetry of this book sings. Like the character Naamah, the text of *Naamah and the Ark at Night* soothes and comforts. That the book focuses on nighttime happenings makes it so appropriate, as it has the calming qualities that can help a little one drift off into peaceful sleep.

Many children will find it interesting that there is so much going on at night on the ark: some animals sleep, but others are restless. Noah dreams through the thunder. Naamah’s voice calms both large and small animals – and even animals that we might consider ferocious accept her gentle touch.

During one “reading” of this book, you might set aside the text and softly sing or hum a lullaby as you look at the illustrations. As you cuddle together with this book, point out the way Naamah touches the animals to calm them. You might ask your little ones when they think Naamah herself sleeps. Who might sing to her?

As your little ones grow, be sure to tell them the origins of their names – and yours. Does your child’s personality mesh with the name you gave him/her? On an ark, would your child be a Noah who slept through the thunder or a Naamah who sang all through the night? And you?

