

silence, an eerie calm, and an ominous stillness set in. Sunlight shone through the cracks of the ark's hull.

Dare Noach and crew open the shutters? What would they see when they looked outside? Did anyone – or any creature – dare to leave the safety of the ark to venture forth to see what was left of what they had once thought of as ‘their world’? Did they now understand - it has never been, and will never be, any human being's world. It was ... it is ... and it will forever remain HIS world. We are just tenants and stewards. We reside here, and breathe the air, at HIS PLEASURE – for HIS PURPOSES, not ours.

And I Wonder, Still I Wonder, Who'll Stop the Rain?

Once the ark came to rest Noach and his family probably looked at each other waiting for the proverbial ‘other shoe’ to drop. Of course, it never did. Slowly it began to dawn on the shell-shocked survivors that they and all the ‘repopulation prototype’ animals on the ark had indeed weathered the storm, just as the Holy One had declared they would. His grace had indeed been sufficient ... as advertised. Now there was *quiet* - sweet, delicious, oh, so welcome *quiet*. Soon the tears would flow. Then laughter would come. Then there would be embraces; and finally, there would come sweet moments of holding each other close, swaying back and forth in sync with the lilting, Heavenly rhythm only the hearts of redeemed men can seem to be able to hear.

Behold How Good and How Pleasant It Is ,,,,

Noach threw open the window. After months of groping in complete darkness, the ark was flooded with *dazzling light!* Their eyes were no longer accustomed to sunlight. They would have to acclimate. But little-by-little their pupils began to constrict – and they could finally see clearly again. They drank in the experience! It was “*I once was lost, but now am found - was blind, but now I see!*” times eight. Depth perception began to return. Peripheral vision began to re-awaken. Then they looked at one another and laughed out loud – because, for the first time in months, they could actually see each other's faces! And with the return of vision, there came an explosion of *hope!* The long season of cataclysmic monsoon had been absolutely relentless – because it had to be. And yet, the storm that had been released represented the *absolute minimum force necessary* to accomplish the strategic objective of cleansing and renewing the earth. Soon everything would be made fresh and new. Soon earth's ‘***be fruitful***’ empowerment would again be in operation, and the perpetual motion machine of life will be bombarding our senses. Soon the Master's palette would be bursting afresh with spring colors, fragrances, and sounds. Soon a new chapter for both mankind and Creation would be written. Soon the task of rebuilding the world would consume every waking moment. Not

now, however. Now it was enough just to celebrate the precious gift of life, to thank God for His amazing grace ... and to relearn how to breathe ... and to carry on conversations ... normally again.

After months of suffocating, mind-numbing quarantine with every species of animal suffering from traumatic indigestion, I am sure he was looking forward to breathing some *fresh air*! Noach and his families had to shield their eyes. Finally the nightmare was over! Finally Noach, his wife, and his three sons and daughters-in-law could start to think about and focus on the future again. Their days of just *hunkering down, covering up, and waiting for yet another watery bomb to drop* on them were ,, done. They had survived. The ark had held together. But what now?

A Window of Hope For the World

One quick glance out the ark's 'window' [Hebrew, *chalon*] reminded the little band of survivors that though the rain had ceased, the effects of the Flood were far from over. The water levels had risen to the point that even the tallest mountains had disappeared under the swelling tides. There was no point in trying to get out of the ark now – there was simply no dry land upon which to disembark. Now would come *the long season of watching and waiting*.

Let's take stock. We have *refuge*. We have *remediation*. We have *provision*. But when will we be able to start over?

The Redeemer's Vision; the Overcomer's Dream

Firmly implanted in Noach's spirit was a *redeemer's vision* – and an *overcomer's dream*. Some would see only devastation; he saw *restoration waiting to happen*. He knew he had to expand his search parameters. He needed a better perspective, and a better pair of eyes. He would not be satisfied until he received 'proof of life'.

By now Noach knew the Divinely instilled instincts and tendencies of every creature that had accompanied him and his family very well. He went to the nesting areas of the ark's aviary. He picked up one of the *ravens* [in Hebrew, *orev*]. Then he picked up one of the two *mate-for-life* doves [in Hebrew, *yonah*]. "*Are you ready to spread those wings again, little ones?*" he probably coo-ed. "*I need you to do a little surveillance for me! Just don't forget, your mates are staying here, so come back soon, and bring a little something - for you and your mate's first new nest on dry land!*"

Today, if we had access to one, we would probably have chosen to send out a drone. But Noach's surveillance operation was extremely low-tech. All he had to do his remote spying for him was a couple of his fine feathered friends. So soon the air around the ark was filled with flapping wings. First the raven; then the

dove. The former, Noah knows, will instinctively look for *signs of death*. The latter, Noah knows, will instinctively seek out any *signs of life*.

Raven - or *dove*? Which of these two species' have you been behaving like lately? Have you been going through the spheres of influence that the Holy One has given you looking for *signs of death* – some putrid pile of decaying flesh you can crow about, dissect, and go into a lustful feeding frenzy over? This is the *modus operandi* of the raven – and human vultures. When men adopt this approach to life, they start to *obsess over* and *immerse themselves* in politics, economics, ideology, philosophy, technology, databases, and institutionalized forms of religion, of pseudo-science, of education, of media, and of entertainment. They become squawkers. They become – in short - '*ravenous*'. But there is another way. No person who knows, loves, and walks in Covenant with the Creator of the Universe should ever embrace the worldview or the lifestyle of the flesh-eating raven. That mindset should be completely foreign to us. We are not designed to sniff out death, much less lust after it, wallow in it, or gorge on it. We are not designed to look for, expose, or expose the wounded or diseased parts of the flesh of others. We are not made to emit the foul stench of carrion-breath. The Holy One has designed for us a more excellent way. We are designed to follow the peaceful, joyful, gentle, and nurturing way of the dove. Let your single eye look at everything and everyone it sees through *dove's eyes*. Always look past the ugly, putrid flesh of others – to the God-given potential our Creator designed into them. Always look for signs of life hidden beneath all the carnage. Look for beauty under the ashes. There is the way of the dove. This is the way of *sh'ma*-people, of Covenant-Keepers, and of humble servants of Heaven's Glorious King. Just remember: *Whatever you spend your time and energy looking for, that is most likely what you will find.*

Proof of Life

Ultimately it will be the way of the dove that brings about the restoration. Ultimately, it will be he [or she] who seeks signs of life and comes forth with evidence of renewal. While the raven forgets its mate, and selfishly gorges on carrion, the dove will stay on task. It will fly until it finds a life-containing seed that has survived the inundation and sprouted in the post-Flood sunlight. Plucking a tender sprig from what will become the patriarchal anchor of a new olive orchard, the dove will return to its mate aboard the ark – with the precious gift of *proof of new life*. For the raven, death is a fixation; for the dove, life is what matters. For the raven, devastation is delicious; for the dove, renewal is delightful. Choose your worldview. Choose your pathway. Choose your ideation and ideology. Choose your lifestyle. And choose your legacy. As it is written in the Song of Songs: *Oh, my dove – in the clefts of the rock; in the secret places of the cliff! Let me see your face! Let me hear your voice! For your voice is sweet, and*

your face is lovely! Song of Songs 2:14.

What Was the Flood Really All About, Anyway?

It was never the Holy One's plan to destroy the world – simply to renew it. The earth has been eternally blessed by the Creator with abundant fruitfulness. Man's corruption and violence cannot stop it. A cataclysmic flood cannot stop it. Hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, earthquakes, super-volcanos, tornados, fires, tsunamis, asteroids, and thermo-nuclear wars cannot stop it. Neither seasons of 'global warming' nor of 'global cooling' [i.e. ice ages] can bring it to a halt. No matter what is thrown at it, it is always just a matter of time before the Creator's ***Be Fruitful*** Empowerment kicks back into full gear and replenishes the land, the seas, and the atmosphere of earth. It is just a matter of time until one or more – and eventually all – of the seeds of life that the Holy One called forth from the *eretz* on the Third Day of Creation Week awaken, sprout, and begin to produce evidence of the life-force within them - exactly as they were programmed to do by the Holy One when He spoke them into being. Photosynthesis will take place. Roots, stems, leaves and flowers will burst forth. Pollination will occur, and fruit – bearing a new crop of seeds – will set. Gardens and orchards will return. Be calm. Relax. Trust the Creator. And enjoy the Creative/Recreative Process. New life – new growth – is lying dormant, ready to burst forth before our eyes, all the time. The issue for each of us is whether we do – or do not – have 'dove's eyes', that can see, celebrate, and cooperate with the process as it unfolds.

L'Chayim – To Life!

Imagine, if you will, the celebration that broke out the day the dove came flying back to the ark with a green olive sprout in its mouth! How lovely on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news! Perhaps, as the Shulamite later would, they sang of the Holy One:

*My Beloved is radiant and ruddy – the Fairest of Ten Thousand!
His Head is like the finest gold! His locks are wavy – black like a raven;
but His eyes are like those of a dove, by the rivers of water!*

[Song of Songs 5:10-12a]

Upon seeing the fresh, green sign of new growth, did Noach's family know that their ordeal was really over. Only then did they realize that the earth was once again, even as they huddled together in the ark, being made not only safe for them to inhabit, but fruitful for them to thrive. Only then did they know for sure that they were indeed not a bunch of castaways - but were *the chosen remnant* of the Most High. By the grace of the Holy One, they now realized, they were by no means, under any circumstances, *victims*. By the provision of the Holy One, they were going to be survivors – and much more. By the empowerment of the Holy One, they were going to be overcomers. By following the wisdom teachings of the

Holy One, they were going to model for all future generation what it looks like to be transcendents. And according to the will of the Holy One, they now knew for certain that the Holy One's Grand Plan of Redemption for mankind as well as Creation would soon take another giant step forward. This new phase in the Grand Plan would start with a Covenant of shalom and a *bow in the clouds* – and would culminate with the birth, from the line of Noach's son Shem, of a man named *Avram* and a woman named Sarai.

Ah, but we are getting ahead of ourselves again, aren't we? Back on the ark, Noach and his family are still just marveling at the sign of the dove and the olive branch. And that is altogether as it should be. They have, after all, just weathered the perfect storm.

The Perfect Storm

The Great Flood was the ultimate *perfect storm*. If a person survived the crashing lightning, the powerful winds would cause the structures in which he sought shelter to collapse upon him. If one survived the winds and building collapses, the rapidly rising waves would pursue him until he had no place left to run. And if one somehow managed to survive all of that, the scalding geysers of water and the toxic clouds of steam would melt the tissue from his bones and dissolve the lungs within his chest. Unless, of course, the person was inside the ark.

Inside the ark Noach's family was insulated from the worst of the storm. The confines of the ark represented the 'distinction' the Holy One made between those who *sh'ma* His Voice and respond appropriately, and those who choose to ignore His calls to return to Him and His Ways - and choose to pursue instead the ways of corrupted thought and oppressive speech and action that the serpent let loose in the world. We will see this 'distinction' or 'place of safety' concept presented time and time again in Scripture. This theme will repeat itself over and over – taking us all the way to the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation. *Option; Rebellion; Remnant; Refuge; Remediation; Renewal; Redemption* – these are the rhythms of the redemptive process. Your life is undoubtedly in one of the movements of that great symphony at this very moment.

Riding out the storm on the ark could not have been particularly pleasant. Spectacular electrical storms caused the timbers of the ark to tremble and groan as it tossed, swayed, and rushed headlong in whatever direction the *Sure Hand of the Creator of the Universe* took it. For 40 dark days and 40 seemingly endless nights the harbingers of the Holy One's idea of hope for the future of mankind huddled safely in the hold. At times it probably felt like the ark was going to *break in two*; or *shatter* into a million pieces; or *capsize* and *be swallowed by the waves*. And

then there was the unthinkable – what was happening around them. There was no entertainment. There were no luxuries. There was no Wi-Fi, no television, no radio, and no social media. There were no books or magazines to read. There were no games to play. There were not even any juicy tidbits of gossip to share. The hold was damp and dark. The smell was sometimes nauseating. But the occupants knew that the most unpleasant position on the ark was to be preferred over any place on the surface of the earth. It must have seemed to Noah and his family like the second coming of the Primordial Deep.

Who Was the Captain of this Ship?

It is natural for human beings to focus on the ark – the pitch-coated wooden boat in which Noah, his family, and the animals rode out the greatest storm the earth has ever seen – as the reason for the success of the journey. It is natural to give the credit for humankind’s survival to a human being or to something a human being built. It is natural to laud Noah’s remarkably skillful construction of the vessel. But to let that be our focus misses the point of the story. Without a rudder or a sail, the boat Noah and his sons constructed must have seemed to its inhabitants to merely float wherever the unpredictable currents carried it. Fortunately there was much, much more going on than that. Just outside the realm of vision of Noah and his family, someone else was right there with them on the ark. The sure Hand of an Unseen Navigator was always at the helm. An unearthly Captain was charting every meter of the vessel’s course, and every degree of its bearing. Neither slumbering nor sleeping, this Unseen Navigator remained faithful day and night. He – much more than Noah – kept constant and loving vigil over the vessel and its precious cargo. And He, and He alone, brought the ark and its cargo safely through the storm to end all storms.

You do know that the same Ancient Mariner charts and steers your course as well, do you not, Dear Reader? He is the only reason the ark and its inhabitants survived the storm and reached their assigned destination - and He is the only reason you and your household will do the same. Man’s job is simply to cooperate with Him, collaborate with Him, stay in communication with Him, follow His directions, enjoy His Company, and trust both His Kindness and His Wisdom. It was so in the beginning. It is so today. It will be so forever.

The Most Incredible Journey Ever Undertaken

Through the wonderful, water-like medium of Torah the Holy One has called us all to ride along with Noah and his family on the most incredible journey ever taken. Through the creative energy released by the Divinely inspired words of Torah into our souls, it is as if we – along with Him – are right there with Noah and his family all the way. We are not supposed to read the story as if it were just another historical event. We are supposed to *relive it* - in *real time*. We are supposed to

feel the force of the torrents. We are supposed to stare into the spray of the geysers. We are supposed to experience in our souls the hurricane-force winds. We are supposed to shudder at the power of the thunderclap of each bolt of lightning. We are supposed to realize what it was like to not know when, or where, or how, it would all end. And we are supposed to sense and learn from the calm reverence that possessed every animal on board, from the fiercest lion to the meekest lamb, and from the strongest eagle to the most wary buck, as the storm raged around them.

Whatever may befall us – whatever challenges we may face in this life - none will ever be anything near as fearful as what was experienced by Noah and his family members. From that truth we are both to *take comfort* and *draw strength*. We, like Noah and his family, are privileged to be born, live, and die under the constant watchful care of the same Unseen Navigator that brought them through their ultimate perfect storm experience. Rightly do we love Him; but rightly do we fear Him as well.

Seeing Another Side of the Creator

Most of us at one time or another function out of a very limited and *one-dimensional concept of the One Who Created Us*. After all, most who come from Hebrew backgrounds can only stare in horror at the *Shoah* [Holocaust] endured by the covenant people at the hands of the Nazis and say, “*How could a ‘good’ God have let this happen?*” Similarly, many who come from traditional Christian backgrounds to the study of Torah are initially more familiar – and a whole lot more comfortable – with the vision of a cute, cuddly little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lain in a manger than an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and overpowering Creator-King who could – and would – and did – and will again - release a horrifying flood on His own Creation, including men and women and children He not too long ago lovingly designed to bear His image. I mean, the question of “*How could a loving God allow ,,*” is not even enough with regard to the Flood, because, in the case of the Flood, the Holy One not only “allowed” it to occur, but *carefully and strategically planned it, prepared for it for 120 years, and proactively and deliberately brought it about*.

Is it not therefore appropriate to look at the Flood and say, “*What kind of a God would do this?*” *Blasphemy*, you say? Don’t get me wrong. I start the inquiry from a perspective of knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy One is *good*, and is no mad scientist, serial killer, or mass murderer. I begin the discussion with a great “given” – that the Holy One is a *Creator*, and a *Covenant-Keeper*, a *Healer* and a *Sin-Cleanser*. I embark on the conversation with the confident assurance that everything the Holy One does – or allows, for that matter – is *REDEMPTIVE* in

both purpose and effect, and is rooted and grounded solidly in the purest, most perfect form of LOVE that ever existed or could exist. Therefore as we meditate on the Flood Narrative of Torah let us not look at the Flood – or any judgment of the Holy One – as the “end”. As we look ahead to the events of Revelation, let us not try not to speak of them as the “*end of the world*” or the “*end times*”. The Holy One is not about “*endings*”; He is about “*beginnings*”. The Holy One of Creation is not about *destruction*; He is about *renewing*. He is not about *death*; He is about *eternal life*.

I Don't Know Why You Say “Good-bye”, I Say ‘Hello’

Unregenerate people immersed in popular culture and popular philosophy quite understandably look at the Flood Narrative – and of course the events described in the Book of Revelation - as an “end”. And these narratives do describe an “end”, in a sense - as the birth of a baby is the “end” of its gestation. From the Holy One’s perspective however each ending is also a new beginning. Think of a baby’s life. A baby is completely alive in its mother’s womb. And yet, there comes an end to this form of life. The baby’s life is not over when it is born – no, not by any means. The baby just enters a *new phase of life*.

Think also of earth’s moon. Each month the reflection of the light of the sun on Earth’s moon wanes and almost disappears, hidden from our view by earth’s shadow. But then it emerges from the shadow and waxes bright once again. This is the pattern of renewal established by the Holy One. Messiah would put it this way:

Most assuredly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the eretz and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[John 12:24]

Land, Ho!

Torah tells us the very day on the Holy One’s calendar when Noach first experienced the ‘new/renewed world’ – the day he removed the covering from the ark and let the sunshine come flooding in. What a day! Imagine the beams of light rushing through the stairwells of the three stories of the ark, and gradually re-awakening all the living creatures with their energy! Torah tells us that the day this occurred was *1 Tishri – the day of breathing – the so-called ‘Jewish’ New Year*². Before the Exodus, the *first month* of the year was recognized in Hebraic thought

² At the time of the Exodus the Holy One established another day, 1 Aviv/Nisan, as the day from which months were to be counted by His Covenant nation. Prior to this, however, the 1st of Tishri – which by tradition was the anniversary of the day upon which man had been created – was ‘new year’s day’, and called the first day of the first month.

to be the month we now know as *Tishri*³. The first day of the first month – the day many people now refer to as *Rosh HaShanah* - was the anniversary of the day the Holy One created/breathed life into man. The first day of Tishri is therefore Biblically known as *Yom T'ruah* [the appointed time for blowing/breathing]. It should come as no surprise that the day ‘the waters were dried up’ for Noach and his family was Divinely planned to coincide with the anniversary of the day the Holy One breathed into man his *nish'mat ha-chayim* [breath of the life]. That day has an *energy* to it – an energy of new hope, and new life. Creation understands that, even if most human beings do not. On the day man was ‘born’, man was – always is - *reborn*.

The Ark as a ‘Recovery Room’

Though the surface of the ground was dry by the *Rosh HaShanah* after the Flood, it took another month and a half before the *eretz* had congealed enough to walk on. For Torah tells us:

Uv'chodesh ha-sheni b'shiv'ah v'esrim yom l'chodesh

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,

yaveshah ha-aretz

the eretz was dry.

[Genesis 8:14]

Hence, the total time Noach and his family remained on the ark was twelve lunar months (each of which is 29 1/2 days) and 10 days. The ark-stage began on the 17th of Cheshvan in the year the fountains burst forth and continued until the 27th of Cheshvan in the next year. That makes the duration of the Flood 1 complete solar year - to the day. Noach and his family spent 5 months of that year floating. Then they spent 7 additional months on the ark waiting for the Holy One to tell them that the earth had recovered from the *mabbul* enough to start over.

One would think that as soon as the ark came to rest⁴ Noach and his family would be anxious to pile out and see what had happened to the world. They weren't. Torah describes an almost incomprehensible reluctance on the part of Noach and his family to leave the ark. Even when the dove brought back an olive branch, and Noach knew that the waters were receding from the earth, Noach once again

³ The name Tishri as the descriptive name for the first month did not come into use until after the Babylonian Captivity.

⁴ In June 2006 an expedition team found what some believe were the remains of Noach's Ark in the Ararat mountain range in Northern Iran, at an elevation of 13,100 feet. , Arch Bonnema, a member of the team, reported: “*I definitely believe that this is the ark*”. According to this report, the floors, the walls and other pieces of the vessel found by the expedition were so huge that no team of men or beasts could have carried the timber to the elevation of 13,100 feet, where they were found. It appeared that the ark has been covered up by ice and snow for a long time, but that just before the expedition record high temperatures had melted the snow and ice.

closed the window and waited another seven days (through yet another Shabbat)⁵. Then, he sent the dove out a third time, and waited some more. And, even yet, it was another 37 days before Noach and his family ventured forth to actually set foot on the surface of the ‘new’ earth.

⁵ Genesis 8:12.

What Took Noach and His Family So Long to Disembark?

For anyone who has ever experienced ‘cabin fever’, this lengthy delay in leaving the Ark is, at first blush, unreal and puzzling. But on deeper reflection the reluctance of Noach and his family to leave the Ark is completely understandable. First of all, Noach and his family did not know for sure, just because they had run aground, that ‘it’ was over. Who knew what awaited them outside the ark? They had to question whether every living being on the face of the earth besides them and their cargo of animals had been destroyed yet.

Secondly, they did not have a clue either where they were or what they would find when they disembarked. Were there mobs of angry escapees, who had rushed to the top of the mountain to escape the waters, waiting to attack them and eat the animals on the ark? Were there dead bodies everywhere? Had the receding floodwaters left behind a ‘toxic soup’ of biochemical hazards more dangerous than the waters themselves? Had they survived the Flood only to die from disease and pestilence?

Thirdly, the Holy One had told them when to enter the ark – but He had not said anything about *when they were to leave*. And one thing which had to be on the minds of Noach and his family members was the number one spiritual principle they had learned - that *sh'ma*-ing the Word of the Holy One brings life, while presumptive conduct brings death.

Fourthly, being in the Holy One’s place of protection for all that time, experiencing his watchful care, and living out the destiny of His covenant people had turned out to be so wonderful, so invigorating, and so completely fulfilling that *they simply did not in the final analysis have any desire for it to end*. After all that had happened in the ark leaving it would have to feel a little bit like *leaving God*.

The Holy One Speaks to Noach A Third Time

Torah does not mention any communication from the Holy One to Noach or his family the entire time they were in the ark. He last spoke to them 7 days before the fountains burst forth. Now He breaks the silence with a third ‘God-encounter’. The Holy One spoke to Noach, saying,

Tze min-ha-teivah

Go forth from the teivah,

atah v'ishteicha uvaneicha un'shei-vaneicha itach

you, and your wife and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

Kol-ha-chayah asher itcha mikol-basar

Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh,

ba'of uvabeheimah
including birds, cattle,

uv'chol-ha-remes ha-romes al-ha-aretz
and every creeping thing that creeps on the eretz;

hayeitze itach v'shareitzu v'aretz
that they may spread out abundantly in the eretz,

ufaru v'ravu al-ha-aretz
and be fruitful, and multiply on the eretz.
[Genesis 8:16-17]

Cabin fever or not, after what they had seen Noach and his family were not going to do *anything* – or go anywhere - unless the Holy One told them to. After all, who knows what awaited them outside the ark? So the Holy One gave them the word. And their 12-month plus tour of duty in the Holy One's Royal Navy was finally at an end. Here is how Torah describes the disembarkment:

Vayetze-Noach uvanav v'ishto uneshei-vanav ito
Noach went forth, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him.

Kol-ha-chayah kol-ha-remes v'chol-ha-of
Every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird,

kol-romes al-ha-aretz l'mishpechoteihem
whatever moves on the eretz, after their families,

yatze'u min-ha-teivah
went forth out of the teivah.
[Genesis 8:18-19]

A New Season Begins!

Noach and his family left the ark with a sense of tremendous awe. Their first recorded act after getting the animals settled was therefore to build an altar [Hebrew, *mizbeach*⁶] upon which they would dedicate their lives – the new chance at life the Holy One had given them – to the Holy One through the *korban olah*⁷ [*i.e.* a wholly-consumed burnt offering].

Knowing that the Flood would have this effect upon Noach and his sons may have been the reason the Holy One had sent 7 pairs [instead of just 2] of certain species – those species' Torah described as *tahor*. The seventh pair of animals and bird of each such *species* — *were given as a surrogate, or substitute, for mankind*. The

⁶ *Mizbeach* is Strong's Hebrew word #4196, *mem, zayin, beit, chet*, pronounced *miz-bay'-akh*. This is the first Biblical usage of this Hebrew word. The next usage is in Genesis 12 – and the next person said to have built an altar was Avram, who did so upon entering Eretz Yisrael for the first time, and experiencing his first recorded God-encounter there. **Genesis 12:7-8.**

⁷ *Olah* is Strong's Hebrew word #5930, *ayin, lamed, hey*, pronounced *o-law'*. Its verb root means *to ascend* [as a stairway, or steps].

seventh pair of *tahor* animals became a medium of communication and covenant between man and the Holy One.

Do not think for a second, however, that what Noach did at his altar on Mount Ararat was comparable to pagan '*animal sacrifice*'. To the pagan mind, the forces of the universe beyond understanding or control – the sun and moon, love, war, violent storms, volcanoes, etc. – had to be "gods". Since those forces were (potentially, at least) destructive, they were feared. The pagans did not want to be close to such forces – *they wanted those forces to leave them alone!* They pictured those forces as *bloodthirsty predators*, who were going to destroy and eat *something* – so, they decided it was better that *animals* die and get eaten by the bloodthirsty ones than they! They reasoned that if they gave the bloodthirsty monsters (their "gods") *enough* animal (or in some cases human) blood, their 'bellies' would stay "full", and their bloodlust would stay satisfied, and the gods would leave them alone to live in peace (like a full lion or shark will not bother even an easy prey). Hence they "fed" sacrificial animals (and people) to their gods, and hoped for the best. Unpleasant business to say the least. That is not however the Hebraic concept underlying the spiritual act of *making korban*. Noach was not trying to appease the Holy One, nor was he trying to get Him to 'leave him alone' like pagans do. What Noach was doing the exact opposite. Noach was drawing near to the Holy One and dedicating the 'new' world in which he found himself to His Covenant Partner.

Vayiven Noach mizbe'ach l'Adonai

Noach built an altar to the Holy One,

vayikach mikol ha-behemah ha-tahorah umikol ha-of ha-tahor

and took of every tahor animal, and of every tahor bird,

vaya'al olot bamizbe'ach

*and made **korban olah** on the altar.*

[Genesis 8:20]

The Hebraic phrase *korban olah* has been translated into English as "*burnt offering*". This sounds sterile and legal. The true meaning is anything but sterile or legal. *Olah* means "ascending". *Korban* is from a root word meaning "to approach". Hence *korban olah* means an approach made in order to ascend. The animal that was substituted for a man desiring to express his total submission to and longing to commune with the Holy One was burned completely on the altar. By this substitutionary presentation, the man (or the community) expressed its willingness to walk into the flames – be it burning bush, fiery furnace, Nazi incinerator, or whatever; and to do so not out of legalistic sense of duty, but out of *pure love for the Holy One*. *Korban olah* is a threshold of commitment, of dedication. Before one can fulfill the Holy One's Divine plan for his or her life,

one must go through this step of commitment. One must gaze into the flames - and *surrender* to them.

It is because of this fundamental aspect of spiritual life that, ever since the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, the Hebrew people, have begun the education of their children with the book of Leviticus, where the principles of *korbanot* – starting with the *korban olah* - are taught. Such information is rightly considered “*Relationship with the Holy One 101*” – the Holy One’s *primer* on how to approach and relate to Him and on how to live a life dedicated to Him. The first step into such a life is coming to grips with making oneself a living *korban olah*.

One might ask how Noach – who lived long before the Sinaitic revelation - knew about *korban olah*? Neither such a *korban*, nor even an altar, had been mentioned previously in Torah, in any context. Even in discussing the ‘offerings’ of Kayin and Hevel, Torah made no reference to either *olah* or *mizbeach* [altar]. It thus would appear, from the text of Torah, that Noach introduced both of those concepts to mankind. That means he didn’t learn the process from pagans - unlike Moshe, who learned about altar-worship from Yitro, priest of the pagan nation Midyan. So how did Noach learn the process? Ah, there’s the ‘rub’. You see, Noach had walked with the Holy One. He didn’t *have to* learn it. It was a natural outgrowth of his *sh’ma* walk with God. And that, Dear Reader, is because the Holy One preceded Noach in preparing altar and *korban olah*. For He prepared a ‘*lamb slain before the foundation of the world*’, and modeled the process for us all.

Avraham would later come to understand this, as he stood with knife raised over Yitzchak. Torah says he looked ‘up’ and saw a ram caught by his horns in a thicket. But he was standing *on top of* Mount Moriyah. How could a ram – or a thicket - be ‘up’ from him? Only if he, like Noach, upon making *korban olah*, was given a glimpse into Heaven, and into eternity.

The Holy One Opens Heaven For Noach and Mankind

In connection with Noach’s *korban olah* something marvelous happened – the Holy One actually *pulled back the curtains of Heaven* and gave Noach – and all of us who are descended from Noach - a ‘peek’ inside the Divine thought processes. This amazing insight into the thought processes of the Holy One is clearly given *in direct response to Noach’s korban olah*. For in one breath we are told “*the Holy One smelled the sweet savor* [of Noach’s *korban olah*], and in the next breath we are told: “***the Holy One said in his heart ,,***” How, we may ask, can anyone know what the Holy One ‘*said in His heart*’?

The implications are overwhelming! It was as if Noach walked into the Throne

Room of Heaven, and got to listen in. Noah approached the Holy One, through *korban olah*, with reverence and awe – and what did the Holy One do in return? He let him [and, through the record of Torah, us] see beyond the veil - not only into Heaven, but into HIS VERY HEART. I hope that thought absolutely thrills you, Dear Reader. I hope it stirs in you a desperate desire to see into the very heart of the Holy One, and to observe firsthand the thought-processes of the Divine intellect.

Is it possible that if we will submit ourselves through *korban olah*, clinging to Yeshua as our surrogate, and surrendering all we have and are we are to Him, such intimate glimpses into the Heavens can become commonplace? Let's read how Torah describes the way the Holy One responded when Noah presented *his olah*:

Vayomer Adonai el-libo

The Holy One said in his heart,

lo osif l'qalel od et ha-adamah b'avur ha-adam

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake,

ki yetzer lev ha-adam ra minei'urav

because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;

v'lo osif od l'hakot et-kol-chai ka'asher asiti

neither will I ever again strike everything living, as I have done.

Od kol-yemei ha-aretz zera v'katzir

While the eretz remains, seed time and harvest,

V'kor v'chom v'kayitz v'choref

and cold and heat, and summer and winter,

v'yom v'laylah lo yishbotu

and day and night shall not cease.

And the *eretz* remains to this day. And seasons change every three months according to plan.

A New Beginning For Mankind and Creation

The final recorded God-encounter of Noah's life ends with a ***b'racha*** [blessing]. The Holy One blesses him and all of household. Here is the blessing as recorded in Torah.

P'ru ur'vu umil'u et ha-aretz

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the eretz.

This is, of course, nothing new. This is merely a repetition of the ***b'racha*** the Holy One spoke over *ha-adam* after *bara*-ing him on the sixth day of Creation. But the Holy One does not stop with this ***b'racha***. He begins to prophesy to Noah, saying:

The fear of you and the dread of you will be on every animal of the eretz,

***and on every bird of the sky. Everything that the ground teems with,
and all the fish of the sea are delivered into your hand.***

And then, as the Holy One had given Adam instructions regarding what in Gan Eden was to be – and not to be – food for mankind in that context, the Holy One likewise gives Noach and his family instructions regarding what in the immediate post-*Mabbul*, definitely un-Gardenlike, context was – and was not – to be eaten by them. The Flood had, of course, temporarily destroyed the plant life on earth. Hence the Holy One authorized for the first time the eating of animal flesh, saying:

Every moving thing that lives will be l'ochlah [for food] to you.

As the green herb, I have given everything to you.

But flesh with the life of it, the blood of it - lo techeilu [you are not to eat it].

I will surely require your blood of your lives. At the hand of every animal I will require it.

With the Holy One there are always boundaries on every human appetite – because our appetites are never to be allowed to become our god. Animal flesh would not be forbidden of Noach and his family – but it could only be eaten *if it was first drained of blood*. Eating the blood of animals – or eating meat containing blood – was prohibited to Noach and his family *upon penalty of death*.

Does this mean Noach was now being encouraged to eat the flesh of *tamei* animals like the pig, the rabbit, the squirrel, and the snake? On the surface, it sort of looks that way. But let's think about that for a moment. How many representatives of the *tamei* species did Noach and his family have available to them? They had *two* – one male of the species and one female of the species – of such *lo tahor* animals. Now, how many representatives of the *tahor* species of animals - sheep, goats, oxen, and the like - did they have available to them? They had fourteen of each such species - 7 pairs. So, using rudimentary common sense, *which set of animals do you think Noach and his family would most likely understand the Holy One intended for them to eat* – the ones which were *fewest in number* [lo tahor animals like pigs, squirrels, rabbits, etc.], or the ones which were *largest in number* [tahor animals such as sheep, oxen, etc.].

After all, if Noach chose to slaughter and eat one of the two members of any of the *lo tahor* species, *he would be destroying the mate of the other one*. How then would they have procreated, and still exist by the time the Holy One made the pronouncements of Leviticus 11 regarding *tahor* and *tamei* animals? Perhaps the Holy One is actually a little wiser than theologians give Him credit for being!

Questions for Today's Study

1. In today's assigned verses Noach and his family finally end their 365+day odyssey aboard the Holy One's floating zoo. But first:

[A] As Noach's son *Yafet* [Japheth] (or, if you are a woman or girl, Yafet's wife),

notices the water start to recede and mountaintops beginning to appear, what thoughts do you think may be going through his (or her) head. Write an imaginary diary entry for him (or her) for the day the mountaintops become visible again.

[B] What was the first bird Noach sent out of the ark, and what did it do?
What did Noach send this bird out to look for?

[C] What was the second bird Noach sent out, and what did it do?
What did Noach send this bird out to look for?

[D] What was the third bird Noach sent out, and what did it do?

[E] What was the fourth bird Noach sent out, and what did it do?

2. By the time of what *moed* [Torah Festival] does Torah say the waters had dried up? Of what prior event was this the anniversary, according to the Jewish sages?

3. How many times does Torah tell us that the Holy One spoke to Noach during the 365 days that Noach was on the ark?

4. How did Noach and his family know it was time to come out of the ark and to bring the animals with them?

5. When Noach came out of the ark he and his family got busy immediately.

[A] What was the first thing Noach did?

[B] How do you think Noach knew to do this?

[C] How do you think Noach knew what animals were “clean”?

[D] The word that we translate as ‘offering’ really does not translate very well from the Hebrew. Look up the word translated as ‘offering’ and write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[E] Torah will subsequently define several types of ‘offerings’. Which of the five basic types of offerings did Noach make? What is the purpose and symbolism of this type of ‘offering’?

[F] If you did not correctly answer the last subpart you will not understand how the answer to this subpart could be true, but here goes. What was it that stirred the Holy One to ‘say in His heart’ that He would never again curse the ground because of man?

[G] When had the Holy One “curse[d] the ground because of man”?

[H] According to what the Holy One *said in his heart* (what He did not declare out loud to Noach), what eight things do we know will ‘never cease’ ‘as long as the earth endures’?

[I] Will the earth endure forever? Before you answer, read Psalm 102:25-28, and II Peter 3:10-13.

6. When the Holy One does speak to Noach for the first time after the Flood He first blesses him and all his household, and then gives them instructions for living

– a series of instructions which has come to be known in some circles as the ‘Noachide laws’.

[A] List each blessing pronounced upon Noah and his sons.

[B] List each of the *mitzvot* [i.e. life-governing directions/instructions describing the will of the Holy One for the Creation made in His image] given to Noah and his sons by the Holy One.

[C] For what does the Holy One declare He will always require an accounting?

7. In today’s haftarah we read the Holy One’s promise to the remnant of Israel, who were starting over in the ruins of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. To those who *sh’ma*-ed the Holy One and submitted to let their children be taught by Him He declared:

Hen gor yagur efes me'oti

Behold, they [your enemies] may gather together, but it is not of Me:

mi-gar itach alaych yipol

whoever shall gather together against you shall fall because of you.

Hineh anochi barati charash nofei'ach b'aish

Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals,

peicham umotzi cheili l'ma'aseihu

and brings forth a weapon for his work;

v'anochi barati mash'chit l'chabel

and I have created the waster to destroy.

Kol-keli yutzar alaych lo yitzlach

No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper;

V'chol-lashon takum-itach l'mishpat tarshi'i

and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.

zot nachalat avdei Adonai

This is the heritage of the servants of the Holy One,

V'tzidkatam me'iti ne'um-Adonai

and their righteousness which is of me, says the Holy One

[A] To whom is the Holy One speaking in this passage?

[B] Before these verses can rightly be taken and applied to your life, what things must have occurred in your life?

[C] What two things does the Holy One tell Israel is the ‘heritage’ of the ‘servants’ of the Holy One and their ‘vindication’ from Him?

[D] In Strong’s and Gesenius look up the words translated ‘heritage’, ‘servants’ and ‘vindication’ [for the latter the KJV uses the term ‘righteousness’]. Write each Hebrew word and its meaning.

8. In today's reading from the apostolic writings *Kefa* (Cephas, called Peter) discusses *mikveh* – what has come to be known, in a corrupted form, as “baptism”. He says:

*This [the Flood] is a symbol of mikveh-immersion, which now saves you –
not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,
but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection
of Yeshua the Messiah, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven,
angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.*

[A] How does Kefa describe the *mikveh*?

[B] What does Kefa say a person who undergoes *mikveh* pledges?

[C] How is the *mikveh* related to, and illustrative of, the resurrection?

[D] How do you think the *mikveh* is related to the waters of Yeshayahu

[Isaiah] 55:1 – part of this week's haftarah?

*May you experience the joy of the Holy One's Presence
as well as His Provision, and may you have a new beginning.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

*For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this:
that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God;
whether it is love or hatred, man doesn't know it; all is before them.
All things come alike to all. There is one event
to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, to the unclean,
to him who sacrifices, and to him who doesn't sacrifice.
As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath, as he who fears an oath.
This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event to all:
yes also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil,
and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.
For to him who is joined with all the living there is hope; for a living dog
is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die,
but the dead don't know anything, neither do they have any more a reward;
for the memory of them is forgotten.
Also their love, their hatred, and their envy has perished long ago;
neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.*

*Go your way - eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart;
for God has already accepted your works.*

*Let your garments be always white, and don't let your head lack oil.
Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your life of vanity,
which he has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity:
for that is your portion in life, and in your labor in which you labor under the sun.*

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might;
for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in She'ol, where you are going.*