

The Saga of Noach ,the Raven And the Dove
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

The epic of Noach and the flood is well known. There is quite a lot of archeological evidence of the ark's existence on Mount Ararat where the Torah states that the ark came to rest. It is known that in these parts of the world places have not changed names that often. Interestingly, almost every culture has the same basic story in its folklore. Each culture seems to have adapted the story to its own orientation such as the Eskimo version, which claims the ark as a gigantic kayak, an Eskimo hunting boat. What is not as well known or focused on as much is the saga of Noach, the raven and the dove towards the end of Noach's stay on the ark.

The Torah tells us in Berishis 8:7-14 that Noach sent a raven out of the ark and then a dove. The raven flew back and forth until the waters dried up upon the earth. Then Noach sent a dove, which returned. Rashi explains that Noach was testing to see if the dove would come back in which case it meant it had not found a place to nest. The first time it did not. The second time it came back with an olive leaf in its mouth. The third time it did not return.

Chazal understand the raven as a symbol of evil and cruelty as it is known they abandon their children at an early stage. We have some proof for this in the verse in Tehillim 147:10 which states Hashem gives food to the children of ravens that call. Chazal even say that the raven kept coming back to the ark since it suspected Noach was after its mate. Furthermore, the raven, together with Cham and the dog disobeyed the command to separate from their mates on the ark. Noach could not punish Cham and the dog at present because of the flood but he sent the raven out. The dove is a symbol of righteousness as it is the only bird species accepted as a korban. Building on this understanding of Chazal, the Alshich writes the following on this parsha. The raven is a hint to the neshamos of the evil ones. They die for their sins and 'go back and forth', meaning they suffer the pains of their physical body crumbling for their sins. The dove, on the other hand represents the neshamos of the Tzaddikim. There are a unique few Tzaddikim who go straight from this world to Gan Eden without any detours. Most Tzaddikim, however, need to rectify certain things before they enter Gan Eden. Very often that requires them to return to this world to make certain rectifications. This idea of returning is hinted at by Noach waiting seven days each time before sending the dove out again. The seven

days is a hint to the seventy years most of us are allotted in this world. Once the nesahma enters Gan Eden it no longer returns to this world. This is the meaning of the dove never returned to Noach again. While there are times Hashem sends Tzaddikim of previous generations into our world as the Bais Aharon states, to give the current generation the benefit of having the Tzaddik in their midst, in terms of the rectification, they need not return to this world. Once they earned their way into Gan Eden, they finished their mission in our world.