

LIGHT

FROM THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS NOACH

BY
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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - PARSHAS NOACH

**LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE
ESSAYS ON PARSHAS NOACH**

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**Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who,
more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us
for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. THE WATERS OF NOACH
2. NOACH AND THE FUR INDUSTRY
3. THE NEW WORLD ORDER
4. L'CHAIM
5. A PIECE OF PIECE IS NOT ENOUGH
6. IN YOUR FACE
7. *ARE YOU A RAVEN OR A DOVE*
8. G-D LOVES ANIMALS
9. FROM GENERATION TO
GENERATION
10. TWO BEGINNINGS
11. THE WATERS FROM ABOVE AND
BELOW

**12. A LOGICAL FLOOD AND A FLOOD
OF LOGIC**

**13. THE THREE TIERS OF TORAH AND
PRAYER**

14. IT'S HOW YOU DRINK!

15. WHO EATS FIRST?

16. RAIN AND SHINE

17. FROM MINIMALIST TO MAXIMALIST

18. BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

19. THE ELUSIVE FOURTH SON

**20. NOACH'S ARK AND HAMAN'S
GALLOWS**

21. EYES ON THE GOAL

**22. NOACH AND MENACHEM: EASING
AND COMFORTING**

INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Noach* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - PARSHAS NOACH

thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

The parsha of Noach is connected to Moshiach. The Ark and the flood waters are both positive symbols of life in the future period following the Redemption. Several of the essays discuss this concept.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

ESSAY ONE

THE WATERS OF NOACH

Empathy is a G-d given gift can prevent the world's degeneration and a cure for societal ills.

Noah lacked this gift. It was given to us in generous measure at Mount Sinai.

Let's use it!

ESSAY ONE

THE WATERS OF NOACH

120 Years?

In this week's portion, the Torah speaks of how Noach was told by G-d to build an ark so that he and his family would be saved from the flood that would destroy almost all of the world's inhabitants.

Our sages in the Midrash tell us that Noach spent 120 years to build this Ark! Was the reason it took so long to build this ark due to Noach's tardiness?

Again our sages inform us that, on the contrary, Noach's extensive involvement in building the Ark was part of his mission to elicit a reaction from the corrupt people. When they would ask him why he is devoting his life to building the ark, he was to tell them about the impending disaster and encourage them to mend their ways.

Now, in spite of Noach's involvement in the mitzvah of building the Ark for 120 years, the

Zohar (the principle work of Jewish Mysticism) criticizes him for not praying for his generation. The prophet Isaiah, in this week's Haftorah (supplementary reading from the Prophets), therefore, refers to the flood as "the waters of Noach," because he could have averted the flood. The flood is therefore ascribed to him, as if he was guilty for all the sins of the people.

What was Noach Lacking?

A question can be asked:

Wasn't the fact that he was involved in building the Ark for 120 years, and used this opportunity to tell people about the flood and their need to repent, sufficient? What more could one have asked of Noach?

The answer provided by the Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos*) lies in the nature of Noach's efforts to get the people to change. Noach was concerned not for the members of his generation, but for the fulfillment of G-d's will. Noach was unlike Moses who was so concerned for the plight of the Jewish people that he was prepared to give his life for them,

to the point where he said to G-d, "If you do not forgive them, erase me from your book."

Moses' life was Torah. And yet he was willing to have his association with Torah obliterated in order to save the Jewish people. That was the most powerful demonstration of concern for the people, not just the fulfillment of G-d's will!

Unfortunately for the people of Noach's generation, he did not possess this sensitivity. He just did his job as he was told; nothing less and nothing more. Noach lacked empathy.

Twin Imperatives

The lesson we learn from this, is that a Jew has to be concerned with two matters:

Firstly, like Noach, we should devote ourselves entirely to the fulfillment of G-d's will. Lest anyone think that empathy is all that counts, the Torah makes it clear that Noach was a righteous man because he did all that was right.

However, the second lesson from the story of Noach is that it does not suffice to be devoted to fulfillment of G-d's will exclusively when it comes to the welfare of the Jewish nation. We must follow Moses' example, who was prepared to give his life for the Jews. One should make every effort to help everyone, and, particularly a member of our family, another Jew, not only because it is G-d's will, but also because of our deep concern for every Jew, and we will not stop until every Jew is helped.

To be sure, as Jews we have to be concerned with all of humanity. But, there is a qualitative difference between the way we relate to a fellow Jew and the rest of society. Every Jew is bound together with every other Jew on three levels.

First, we all have the same source. Whether born as a Jew or convert in accordance with Jewish law, we all trace ourselves back to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of Jewish people. More importantly, we all trace ourselves back to the revelation of G-d and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Our Sages tell us that all of our souls, including the souls of the converts, were present at Mount Sinai, when G-d made a unique covenant with us and forever chose us to be His nation; a “holy nation and a nation of priests.”

Second, we share a common history. As Jews we’ve been subjected to relentless persecution and commensurate heroism and fortitude to remain steadfastly committed to G-d’s teaching to us.

Third, we have a common purpose and destiny. All of us are guided by the Torah and its commandments; whether we adhere to it or not it is our common purpose. Our destiny is to bring Moshiach and regroup in the Land of Israel with our reconstructed Bais Hamikdash-Holy Temple.

We are not just family in the biological sense, but in every other sense. We are bound by ropes and chains on multiple levels, notwithstanding our many differences and hues.

Indeed, when we stand together and display the powerful sense of love and unity with other Jews, we overflow with love. And from

that overflow we have the capacity to love every human being, as Hillel taught in Ethics of the Fathers: Be the disciples of Aaron, who loved peace, pursued peace and who loved the creatures and brought them close to Torah.” The use of the word creatures indicates that he was advocating love of all people, even those whose only recognizable quality is that they are G-d’s creations.

Everyone has a Need for Moshiach

This explains the need for the Messianic Age expressed by many whose lives now are as perfect as you can get. They enjoy both the material and spiritual blessings. Why do they need and want Moshiach?

The answer is that while they may think they personally do not need Moshiach, but they are not likely to be blind to the fact that there are many people who do not share their spiritual and material blessings.

Wanting Moshiach, among other considerations, is our way of demonstrating empathy on the highest level.

In addition to the fact that Moshiach is G-d's desire and our efforts to bring Moshiach demonstrates our desire to conform to G-d's will, it is also the ultimate expression of empathy for all those who are suffering in the present state of Galus-exile.

ESSAY TWO

NOACH AND THE FUR INDUSTRY

Question: Why was Noah, a most righteous man, not the first Jew?

Answer: He was a *Tzadik* in a fur coat...

ESSAY TWO

NOACH AND THE FUR INDUSTRY

Noach was an enigma. Noach was a righteous man. The Torah heaps effusive praise on him. Yet, notwithstanding his righteousness, Noach did nothing to prevent the flood.

Our sages tell us that Noach was engaged in the Ark building business for close to 120 years, so that he would have ample opportunity to speak to people about the impending flood. The odds were that if a man as righteous as Noach would spend 120 years of his life (he lived to the ripe old – Social Security busting – age of 950!) trying to influence people to mend their ways, he would have changed, at least, one person. In fact, Noach failed to even influence one person! Only Noach, his wife, his three sons and their wives were spared.

How could this be? How could a righteous person fail so miserably?

There is an analogy given to describe two very different types of righteous people.

Imagine living in the “old-country.” It is in middle of the winter and it is bitter cold outside. Our first individual leaves the house with his ax in hand, chops down a few trees, cuts the logs into firewood and shleps it all home, works for an hour or two to get a decent fire going in his fireplace. But, finally, the house turns into a warm and cozy place not only for himself, but for his family and guests as well..

The second personality type also feels the bitter cold and makes an effort to alleviate the situation by simply putting on his fur coat. This individual has been termed in Yiddish, “A *tzadik* in *peltz*-a righteous person in a fur coat.” He might be capable of warming his own body, but he has no concern for anybody else’s discomfort. The other individual who warms his house by chopping wood is no less warm than his “*tzadik* in pelts” counterpart, but, the others in his household are also beneficiaries of his efforts. This is a genuine *tzadik*.

Noach, notwithstanding his righteousness had been labeled a “*tzadik* in *peltz*,” because of his insensitivity to the needs of his own generation.

The question has been raised. Had Noach not spoken to people for the 120 years it took for him to build the Ark it would have been appropriate for us to label him a Tzadik in Peltz. In fact, our sages tell us that he complied fully with G-d's request to lecture the people about their wickedness and to try to steer them in the right direction. Why then should we fault him for not succeeding, considering the fact that he tried?

The answer given by the Rebbe and discussed in the preceding essay, is that there are two ways of trying. The first is where one invests not only time and effort, but also heart and soul, in the process of getting others to change.

The second individual does everything he is told to do, but invests none of his/her emotions. This individual acts out of a sense of duty.

Noach, knew that he had a responsibility to do what G-d had told him to do. And that was it. There was no feeling of genuine concern for the well-being of his generation. He did precisely what he had to do. No more and no less.

In the preceding essay we discussed the contrast between Noach and Moses who was prepared to sacrifice everything dear to him to save the Jewish people.

Noach, Not the First Jew

In truth, Noach is also unfavorably compared with Abraham. When Abraham hears about the impending destruction of Sodom, he intercedes on their behalf, not because he was told to, but because he could not bear to see the suffering of others.

This explains the fact that Jews trace themselves back to Abraham and not to Noach. Abraham was the first to display such concern and empathy for others.

The question can still be asked, why we refer to Abraham, not Moses, as the first Jew.

If we go back to our formation as a nation, we should trace ourselves back to the Jews of the Sinai revelation and to Moses their leader, whether or not we are his biological descendants.

On the other hand, if we are interested in tracing ourselves back to a man of great moral character, a perfect Tzadik, then we should have listed Noach as one of our Patriarchs. Why do we ascribe our genesis to Abraham?

The answer is that as Jews there are two dimensions of G-dly energy that we must possess in order for us to fulfill our Divine mission of making this world a “dwelling place for G-d.” This mission was the very purpose of creation and will be fully realized in the Messianic Age.

The first condition is the fulfillment of the commandments of the Torah. Each Mitzvah generates the Divine energy to transform the world, one Mitzvah at a time. This mission was given to us at Mount Sinai through Moses.

When we perform a Mitzvah the consciousness we must have is the recollection of Mount Sinai, when G-d’s mission statement was forever seared in our souls’ memory. We are G-d’s soldiers marching forward with determination to

make G-d's plan come to fruition, with the coming of Moshiach.

But, being a Jew also entails a personality that is suited for spreading the message to others. This includes educating and inspiring other Jews to observe the commandments and transmit them to the next generation.

To do that, simple adherence to G-d's will cannot suffice. One must be imbued with the mindset and emotional capacity of empathy, caring for others.

So while our marching orders we got at Mount Sinai, at which time we became a Jewish nation, the Jewish individual's propensity for kindness and compassion, empathy and care, we inherited from the Patriarchs and Matriarchs beginning with Abraham.

Thus, Abraham is the first Jew in terms of our Jewish personality, while Moses can be considered the first Jew in terms of became a nation under the Divine Constitution. This might be compared (l'havdil) with the founding fathers of our country, who bequeathed to us a Constitution. But the emotional and spiritual underpinnings of our

country can be traced back further to those who came to our shores with the idea of religious freedom.

“The End is Wedged in the Beginning”

As we approach the imminent Messianic Age, the above lesson is even more relevant. There is a Kabbalistic principle, “The end is wedged in the beginning.” In our context this means that the end of days is more profoundly connected to the genesis of days.

Our genesis is Abraham, not Adam or Noah, and it is his empathy that is most crucial in these last moments of exile as we stand on the threshold of Redemption.

For the Jewish people, particularly now, it does not suffice to merely fulfill our obligations. We must condition ourselves to feel the needs of others.

Noach’s Defense

In Noach’s defense it has been suggested that the world was then not sufficiently

sophisticated to realize this ideal. Indeed, the flood actually accomplished the refining of the world that ultimately led the way for an Abraham. But, even after the flood it took ten generations for his arrival on the world's stage.

This is the level of love and feeling we will all, however, experience in the fullest measure in the age of Moshiach, and have the capacity now to experience this empathy in the most heightened way.

As we prepare for the Age of Redemption, we must recognize the need to foster greater feelings of love and concern for each other. This display of unity will not only hasten the process of Redemption, but it will also make the process a more meaningful and profound experience

ESSAY THREE

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Our goal in life is to enter the “Ark” as did
Noah.

This ark, the symbol of utopia is within
reach!

ESSAY THREE

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Why an Ark?

Noach and his family were the only survivors of the world's most devastating event. The entire world is engulfed in a flood that killed every living creature. Noach – because he was righteous – and his family, however, were spared. G-d had him build an ark that housed him and his family and a representation of all earth's animals.

G-d had many ways of saving Noach. Why did He choose to save him by way of building an ark? G-d could have provided an area that would have been sheltered from the devastating floodwaters.

Our sages tell us that Noach spent 120 years building the ark! The purpose of this extended project was to arouse the curiosity of the people. When they would question Noach as to why he was building the ark, his answer was: "G-d is going to destroy the

world by way of a flood.” By doing so, Noach hoped to influence some of the people to repent.

This explanation, however, leaves us with another question. Doesn't G-d have other ways of influencing people to change, other than having them watch an old man building an ark? And if we look at the results of this approach, they were not too encouraging. Not even one person had a change of heart? Otherwise they too would have come aboard the ark. It seems that there might be additional reasons for choosing the ark as a means for Noach's salvation.

Enter the Word!

The Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement noted that the Hebrew term for “ark” is “*teiva*” which can also be translated as “word.” For just as an ark is a container, so too, are words containers of thoughts.

The Ba'al Shem Tov takes the analogy of a word to an ark one step further. Just as the ark saved Noach from the raging flood

waters, similarly, when one enters into “certain” words, one can find refuge from the turbulent waters that surround us and threaten to engulf us.

The Ba'al Shem Tov continued: The words that can save us from the raging floodwaters are the words of *Tefillah* (prayer) and Torah study.

The floodwaters are symbolic of the multitude of worries, distractions and hardships that we confront daily in our pursuit of a livelihood. The only way we can bring some sanity and serenity into our lives is to not only devote time for prayer and Torah study, but to “enter” into the word (ark). One must allow oneself the luxury of being enveloped and encompassed by the soothing, inspiring and stimulating words of Tefillah and Torah.

Utopia!

There is yet another approach to the ark. The ark was a model of the utopian world that we had at the beginning of creation when Adam and Eve resided in the Garden of Eden, and

that we will experience in the Messianic Age. In this ark, people, carnivores and all other creatures co-existed. The prophecy of the “lion shall lay with the lamb” and similar prophecies, were literally realized in Noach’s ark.

The purpose of existence is to realize that age of perfection. Thus, when G-d created the world, he placed the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, Paradise. Despite the fact that he was ultimately driven out of this paradise, it provided us with the ideal for which humankind must strive – to restore the world to its original state of paradise.

When G-d decided to destroy the world, the survivors might have entertained the thought that the “New World Order” might not include in its goals the restoration of paradise. Perhaps one should not set such lofty goals for oneself.

By starting the flood with an ark, a replica of Paradise, even as the world was undergoing its virtual destruction, G-d was once again advising us that the ultimate goal is to bring about the spirit of unity, peace and holiness that was present in the ark.

The Goal of Paradise on Earth has Not Changed

The lesson for our times is obvious. After 2,000 years of exile and suffering, particularly the Holocaust in most recent times, some might entertain the notion that the Messianic hopes and dreams of the Jewish people are perhaps too elusive. Instead, some might suggest we should lower our expectations. Let us just hope and pray for relative peace.

The lesson of the Paradise-like ark is that never should we abandon our anticipation of a better world; a world of complete peace and unity; the type of world that the Torah predicted would take place after the arduous and often painful experience of the Diaspora. No matter how great the upheaval, G-d's plan for the Era of Moshiach, for true world peace, has not changed. It is our job to stay focused on the goal and attain it, by adding in our Torah and Mitzvot.

ESSAY FOUR

LE'CHAIM

Some people drink to forget; some drink to remember. Some drink for life.

It is far better to live for life than to drink for it.

When we say le'chaim-to life, we should emphasize the spirit of life than the life of spirits.

ESSAY FOUR

LE'CHAIM

Behavioral Reversal

Noach was unmistakably a righteous individual. Only he and his immediate family were deemed worthy of being saved from the flood that destroyed the world. Yet, in the aftermath of the flood, Noach drinks excessively and as a result he is subjected to humiliation by his son Cham.

One wonders at the incredible reversal of Noach's behavior. How could a man who was so strong to resist the wave of immorality that engulfed the entire world, succumb to the relatively mild attraction of wine? What was it about the year Noach spent in the ark that so changed his character?

Some commentators suggest that the flood altered the physical composition of the world. Before the flood people lived to the incredibly

old age of 800 or 900 years. After the flood the life span dropped precipitously. The diminution of longevity was coupled with a general deterioration of physical strength.

Noach did not realize how his own tolerance for alcohol had been diminished. The amount of wine that he imbibed would not have caused him to become intoxicated before the flood. But now his body and mind could not tolerate the amount he drank.

There is an even deeper way of understanding Noach's degradation in the aftermath of the flood.

Two Reasons for Drinking

There are two reasons why one would have imbibed after the flood. The first was to escape the stark reality that the world had just been destroyed and that it was your task to rebuild it almost single-handedly. This awesome realization can lead many people to escape reality and responsibility. There is a Biblical and Talmudic precedent to this form of drinking. It was customary for mourners to be given several drinks of wine to help them

distract themselves from their loss as a way of coping with their tragedy.

A second reason for one's desire to drink after the flood was, paradoxically, to express one's joy at being saved from the world's greatest catastrophe and to be chosen to begin a new world.

There are many precedents for this form of drinking in Jewish tradition, including the recitation of *kiddush* as we usher in every Shabbat and major Jewish holiday.

The Test

Which of these two scenarios is the one that applies to Noach? What test can we apply to an individual who drinks to determine whether it is an escape from grief and hardship or whether it is an expression of joy?

When one drinks to express gratitude and joy, it is done with others. One **shares** a simcha with friends and relatives. Jewish holidays are known for the way that families and guests come together to share their

happiness. When one is interested in escaping, they do not want the company of others.

It is obvious that Noach's drinking wine by himself was not an expression of joy but a way to escape. Noach was not celebrating the miracle of his survival and the new opportunity he was given, but wallowing in the grief of the immense loss that he experienced.

This story might serve as the basis for the Chassidic maxim that while sadness is not a crime it can lead to the most negative consequences. Simcha-joy, conversely, is not a commandment, but it leads to the most positive results.

Our sages tell us that had King Hezekiah sang joyous praise to G-d for the miracles he had experienced he would have been the Messiah.

As we stand on the threshold of the "New world order" that is analogous to the "new world order" that was initiated by Noach, we must learn to **celebrate** the miracles we have all experienced with great joy. This display of overt simcha will surely lead to the most

positive of consequences, and will hasten the process of redemption.

ESSAY FIVE

A PIECE OF PEACE IS NOT ENOUGH

**Peace comes in various forms. True peace is
when they stem from a single source.**

ESSAY FIVE

A PIECE OF PEACE IS NOT ENOUGH

Two Tragedies

Two tragedies link the ten generations that existed from Noach to Abraham. The first is the Flood that destroyed the entire world's population save Noach and his immediate family as well as the animals that were brought into the Ark. The second tragedy was the destruction of the Tower of Babel and the subsequent dispersion of nations.

By prefacing these two incidents before the story of Abraham at the end of this week's parsha, the Torah wishes to indicate that Abraham, the physical and spiritual progenitor of the Jewish nation, would reverse the two forms of evil that the world experienced during these two tragic episodes.

Opposite Evils

To appreciate the role of Abraham in countering the energies that precipitated the flood and, particularly, the Tower of Babel debacle, we should analyze their underlying causes.

Upon deeper reflection it is apparent that there opposite causes for these two catastrophes. Whereas the flood was a result of the degenerate state of the world, with no respect for one another's property, the Tower of Babel generation, ironically, did everything in their power to remedy the divisiveness of their "antediluvian" forebears. By building a city and a tower, they would guarantee that they would never again become divided. Unity was their motto. Yet, G-d was unhappy with that as well.

Flawed Unity

To be sure, as the Rebbe points out (*Likkutei Sichos*), the virtue inherent in their intent on uniting was not lost on our sages when they stated that "Abraham received their reward", implying that they were deserving of some

reward. Yet, it is also evident that their unity was tainted and they were therefore incapable of reaping it for themselves. Instead it was preserved for and ultimately given to Abraham.

Unity is a beautiful trait and virtue. It is the vessel that contains all other blessings, as our sages declared, “If there is peace there is everything.” Yet, it seems that there was something flawed about the peace of the Tower of Babel builders.

Four Kinds of Peace

The Talmud speaks of how “Torah sages bring peace to the world.” It is interesting that the Talmud makes this observation in four different places. A nineteenth century commentator, *Aruch Laner*, explains that these four references to peace correspond to four levels or applications of the ideal of peace.

These four levels are: peace between one person and another, peace between husband and wife, peace between one’s body and soul and peace between a person and G-d.

Peace Between us and G-d; the Foundation

By making the statement four times, our sages are perhaps hinting to us that the only way peace can be whole and endure is if it is not just a “piece” of peace, but it is peace in its entirety, on all four levels, which, are based on the peace between a person and G-d.

Once there is a healthy relationship with G-d we then realize our own G-dly nature, our Divine soul, and we endeavor to create a healthy connection between our bodies and our souls.

Without that realization, the body and soul act as if they were adversaries. Some people will work at punishing their bodies to make it less resistant to the will of their souls. And some will focus inordinately on their bodies' needs. However, when a person is in touch with the G-d by performing of the Mitzvos, it enables one to find the right balance between body and soul. One need not punish the body, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught, but get the body to be in tandem with the soul.

By extension, we realize that there is a G-dly dimension to our marriage as well; that man

and woman are instruments of G-dly energy that combine to generate even more powerful G-dly energy than what we generate when we are single.

As the Talmud states, *Ish* (Man) and *isha* (woman) contain G-d's name as well as the word for fire; *aish*. When G-d's presence is among them the fire turns into powerful and fiery passion. G-d forbid, if there is no presence of G-d the fire can turn into destructive anger and hostility.

And while focusing on our G-dly energies, we begin to realize that the factors that separate us from others, namely our bodily concerns, are trivial compared to the spiritual concerns that unite us. This engenders greater unity, friendship and love. As the Alter Rebbe explains in his work, the Tanya: when the emphasis on the soul is our primary influence, we will find it easy to love one's fellow.

We can now appreciate why the peace and unity created by the builders of the Tower of Babel could not endure. It was not based on a respect for the spiritual dimensions of humanity that unite us; rather it was

motivated by the desire for self-glorification as they said “let us make for ourselves a name.” This limited and superficial peace cannot endure.

Abraham’s Legacy

Abraham’s legacy is that he was able to see the symbiotic relationship that exists between awareness of G-d and all forms of peace. The generation of the flood rejected the very notion of kindness and concern for another, so the Tower of Babel generation attempted to rectify that by accentuating the need for unity. But only Abraham recognized that one cannot separate the two.

While Abraham is credited as the man who performed “righteousness and judgment,” he was simultaneously the person who promoted the one G-d. One cannot separate the love of G-d and the love of one’s fellow human being. Any attempt to do so will eventually fail.

Messianic Era Peace

We can now appreciate the prophecies that describe the Messianic Age as an age when we will all serve G-d as one. Because the Messianic Age is when the awareness of G-d will be complete, the feelings of unity and peace will likewise be complete and natural.

Moshiach, the Jewish leader who will usher in this age is therefore credited by the Prophet Isaiah as being imbued with the awareness of and reverence for G-d as well as the one who will render justice and righteousness. One cannot separate one from the other. Only the combined virtue produces a harmonious blend where each virtue complements and enhances the other.

Rather than seeing all of the positive changes in the world as disparate benefits, the notion of Divine unity is the core and the linchpin of all the changes.

For example: the Bais Hamikdash-Holy Temple to be built by Moshiach is the place in which G-d's unifying energy will be channeled to the entire world.

Peace between nations will be forthcoming because all the nations of the world will be exposed to the unifying dynamic of G-d in

the physical world.

As a result, the destructive force of jealousy will disappear because no one will feel that the one has more than the other because there will be no sense of another, rather a sense of a partner. The key to all of these, and many more changes, is the emergence of a new dynamic relationship the entire world will have with G-d.

All this starts with our efforts today to foster greater unity based on a true and enduring foundation of Divine unity.

ESSAY SIX

IN YOUR FACE

Praise of others is always a positive exercise.

Praise enhances their overt qualities while it helps them to actualize their hidden traits.

But even praise has its limits.

ESSAY SIX

IN YOUR FACE

Two Versions of Praise

When the Torah introduces Noach in the beginning of this week's Parsha it calls him a "*tzadik tamim*-a perfectly righteous person." Yet when G-d addresses Noach directly, He only refers to him as a *tzadik*-righteous person, but omits the word *tamim*-perfect.

Rashi explains that this teaches us that when we praise a person **to his face** we may say only some of his praise. However, when we praise someone not in his presence, we may utter his full praise.

At face value (no pun intended), the reason for this distinction is that telling a person all of his qualities might go to his head and cause him to become conceited.

This explanation, however, is problematic.

Knowing one's qualities is just as essential as knowing one's faults. Egotism and arrogance are not generated by the knowledge of our virtues, but by the attitude that they are an exclusive result of our own efforts, without recognizing the role that G-d has in giving one these qualities. Instead of withholding praise to insure humility, it would make more sense to tell someone that his virtues were a gift of G-d. Why then should we not tell a person all of his praise in his presence?

Regression or Stagnation

To tell us our precise virtues to our face, may lead us to two possible negative outcomes, of regression or stagnation. Knowledge of our "perfection" might cause us to become smug in our own self-assessment, that may make us more vulnerable to evil, causing us to backslide.

Alternatively, even if the knowledge of our qualities will not cause us to decline, it might still stifle our progress. Why should we have to continue to grow, when we were told by others that we have reached the pinnacle of virtue?

Not on Our Face

On a deeper level yet, the words “one does not relate all of one’s virtue to their face,” can be interpreted to mean that one should not suggest that all of one’s virtues are on the “face,” they are already exposed and fleshed out. Rather, it is important to recognize that our true virtues are still in the realm of potentiality. We must always be aware of the need to actualize our potential.

When G-d spoke about Noach, He acknowledged Noach’s spiritual potential, that he was a “perfectly righteous” person. When he spoke of him to his face, i.e., about his surface qualities, He did not allow him to think that these qualities were already in existence; they still had to be actualized.

Chassidic Revelations

With this premise we can explain why many of the qualities that the Jewish people have been endowed with have not been fully articulated in the Torah and Talmudic writings, but have come to light more recently in the writings of Chassidic

literature.

For example, the Ba'al Shem Tov claimed that each Jew — no matter how close or distant he was to Judaism — possessed unique spiritual treasures. While this teaching is hinted to in earlier sources, it took the Ba'al Shem Tov and subsequent Chassidic Masters of recent times, particularly the Lubavitcher Rebbe, to give more robust expression to this concept.

Why was this concept not articulated more forcefully in earlier times? And if these treasures are as latent and embedded in the subconscious as to not have any real impact on our conscious existence, what benefit is there in discussing them now?

In light of the above, we may suggest that just as we don't tell a person all of his qualities in his face because they are so far from being a reality, similarly, the Jewish people and the world at large in the distant past had a long way to go before these qualities could have manifested themselves in the open. By concealing their inner greatness from the Jews, it prevented them from resting on their laurels, or, worse yet,

complacency and degeneration.

Now, however, that we are on the verge of entering into the Messianic Age, where the obstacles that cause us to stagnate and degenerate will be fully removed, and our inner qualities are closer to the surface, it behooves us to appreciate our true value.

In today's world, knowing who we are and the treasures we possess, will inspire us to make the final thrust towards Moshiach and Redemption, by adding in our efforts to liberate these phenomenal qualities that we possess within.

This process of personal liberation will lead us to the time when all of our inner spiritual treasures will have been excavated, and be clearly visible on our faces for all to see.

ESSAY SEVEN

ARE YOU A RAVEN OR A DOVE?

Personalities are not etched in stone.

People can and do change.

Never give up on a human being!

ESSAY SEVEN

ARE YOU A RAVEN OR A DOVE

Sending the Raven and the Dove; in That Order

When Noach wanted to know whether the waters of the flood that destroyed the world had subsided and it was time for him to leave the ark, he first sent a raven.

In this week's Parsha we are informed that the raven, however, just "circled the ark until the earth dried" never carrying out its mission. Noach then sent a dove, which did fulfill its mission.

Since every detail of the Torah is precise and we must learn a lesson from its every nuance, we must try to understand why did Noach send a raven first and then a dove, and why was the raven incapable of fulfilling its mission unlike the dove??

Reserved for a Future Mission

Rashi, citing the Midrash, interprets the “circling of the raven until the earth dried” in a rather novel way:

The raven that Noach sent did not really complete its mission at that juncture in history, but was reserved for a future mission in the days of Elijah the Prophet, over 1,500 years later! In the days of Elijah there was a drought caused by Elijah’s declaration that there would be no rain. Elijah was fed by the ravens that provided him with food. Accordingly, the meaning of the words “until the earth dried up” refers to the future drought in the days of Elijah.

Offhand it is difficult to comprehend what our Sages meant when they said that the raven’s mission was not fulfilled until the days of Elijah.

A Raven’s Personality

The raven is characterized in rabbinic literature as a bird that lacks compassion, even for its own progeny. By contrast, the dove is the symbol of love and compassion.

When Noach sent the bird to determine whether the water had subsided, he was interested in more than the physical angle. Noach knew that the physical aspects of the flood were expressions of the spiritual side of the flood. The flood was intended not only to punish the evildoers, but more importantly to refine the world that had become so corrupted.

As time progressed, Noach wanted to know whether the nature of the world had changed. To verify this he sent the raven, the bird that is known for its lack of compassion to see whether the “new world” that had been brought about by the flood had the effect to alter nature; specifically the nature of a cruel bird.

Noach realized that this level of refinement was not yet achieved. But, this did not mean that the flood had no effect on the world. The flood purified the world, providing it with the potential to change. There would eventually come a time when the level of refinement will succeed in even effecting a reversal of nature. In the days of Elijah—a prophet who is known for his body ascending into paradise, indicating the degree to which

he was able to achieve the refinement of his body — even the raven would change and bring food to the drought stricken Elijah.

The above is based on a premise that contrary to what may appear the reality the world does change irreversibly for the better with the passage of time.

This premise may appear to some to be at odds with a Talmudic statement to the effect that the generations decline.

In truth, there is no contradiction. While the good that we accomplish digs deep into the “psyche” of the world. To ensure free choice, the surface and superficial evil can become stronger. So while we may see more evil in the world, deep down in the earths bowels there is refinement occurring each and every time we perform a Mitzvah. Our potential has increased exponentially from the time of the flood until the present.

The Messianic Age will finally make our internal virtue be in sync with the surface. The external and internal dimensions of the world will be mirror reflections of the other’s goodness.

Two Personality Types

Returning to the dove and the raven:

The dove and raven are representative of two personality types. The dove personality is naturally kind and compassionate, whereas the raven personality is naturally cruel, insensitive and selfish.

There are those who are inclined to think that we should give up on the “raven” personality. Even a deluge of purifying waters, i.e., education using the pure and refreshing waters of Torah, will not enable the raven-personality to fulfill his or her G-d given mission to be a source of comfort for the world. Many educators will argue that we should not waste our resources on the raven personality whose character can never be changed.

To dispel this notion, our Sages tell us that while the raven failed in his initial mission in the days of Noach, it was not a reason to give up on the raven. The world had not yet had the chance to change, but Noah was confident that it will change. And in fact, the change had already occurred although imperceptible to us.

This situation can be compared to an earthquake is but the end result of small imperceptible seismic changes, which only the most sophisticated instruments can detect. Noah had this fifth sense and detected the change and realized that it would ultimately reach critical mass in the days of Elijah.

Only in the times of Elijah — the prophet who is charged with the responsibility to announce the coming of Moshiach — will the world reach the critical mass necessary for the transformation of the raven-type into kind and compassionate people.

Witnessing Profound Changes in Society

The lesson for our times is clear. Living as we are in momentous times that are clearly approaching the coming of Moshiach, we are witness to an incredible phenomenon. Notwithstanding the evil that has hit us recently, we have seen profound character changes in many people. The “ravens” have turned into “doves” and are fulfilling their original mission. of being the messengers of hope.

While the last reserves of evil are making their way to the surface and rearing their ugly heads, even more powerful reservoirs of goodness and holiness that lie dormant are waiting to be tapped. Indeed, in the wake of the recent catastrophe (i.e., the events that have become known simply as 9/11) that was generated by the most evil elements of society we have seen the reaction of so many who were willing to risk their lives to save others.

Not all of those people were natural doves; many were closer to the raven type who rose to the occasion and experienced the transformation into the dove personality.

As the Rebbe told us over two decades ago. "Moshiach is on his way. All that we have to do is to add in goodness and kindness and that will hasten his coming even more."

ESSAY EIGHT

G-D LOVES ANIMALS

**G-d created animals and that includes the
animal in us.**

**This does not imply that we should allow the
animal in us to dominate.**

**It suggests that we allow the animal do
contribute its passion to our spiritual growth.**

ESSAY EIGHT

G-D LOVES ANIMALS

Wrong Order?

When Noach was commanded to Build an Ark and bring every living thing into it, he was also told to take food into the ark to feed both Noach and the animals.

Commentators raise the question that the order in this verse seems to go against the general rule that one should first feed one's animals and then oneself and one's family. This rule is based on the words in the Shema:

“And I shall grant forage in your fields for your animals, and you will eat and be satisfied.”

First it mentions that the forage is for “your animals” and then “you will eat.”

Why then did G-d tell Noach to feed himself first and then everything else?

Don't Forget Yourself

One simple answer is that Noach had the immense responsibility of feeding an entire Ark filled with every imaginable creature on earth. If Noach would have first fed every animal, he would have barely found time to eat, in which case he would have been so weakened as to prevent him from doing his job.

The obvious lesson from this is that with all the emphasis in Judaism on selfless devotion to the material and spiritual needs of others, we must not forget ourselves. Not because we are necessarily more important than others, but, often, the only way we can help others is to be taken care of ourselves. A person who is physically or spiritually famished can rarely be of great support to someone who is hungry. Every time they make an announcement on a plane to put on your own gas mask before helping others, this idea comes to mind.

This reversal of order is testament to the sophisticated level of morality the Torah wishes to convey. If not for the express command in this instance to feed his family

first and then the animals they would have naturally gravitated to taking care of the animals first. Self-centered people do not have to be told to take of themselves first.

Feeding the Internal Animal

There can also be a deeper reason for Noach being told to feed himself before the animals. The animal is often used as a metaphor for the animal soul within us. While we are in possession of a G-dly soul, we have to remember that we also have an animal soul. Indeed, the animal soul enters our bodies and sustains us from the moment we are born. Our G-dly souls, by contrast, do not fully manifest themselves within us until our Bas or Bar Mitzvah.

And even after we are in possession of our G-dly soul at the time of Bas and Bar Mitzvah, our animal soul is much more at home in our lives. After all, 12 or 13 years of coexistence with someone makes this individual a familiar and non-threatening presence. The G-dly soul is the “new kid on the block” and can feel like an intruder into our lives.

Now, the difference between the animal and G-dly soul is that the animal soul is interested in itself, in self-preservation, whereas the G-dly soul is interested in G-d and being of service to others. In simple terms: The animal soul is selfish; the G-dly soul selfless.

When we want to do something positive, the G-dly soul is excited and the animal soul feels uncomfortable. This realization may lead us to reach untenable conclusions:

We may entertain the thought that we have to shun the animal soul and its instincts and drives in order to follow the dictates of the G-dly soul. Alternatively, we may feel that we must wait until the G-dly soul becomes stronger and feels more like a resident in our lives than an unwanted guest, before doing certain positive acts. Why rock the boat when you don't have a life-saver and you can't swim.

The problem with the latter approach is that without doing good things, even if it is only for ulterior motives, we will never get the G-dly soul to amount to anything in our life. It will always remain a lonely outsider with no

clout. If you don't take the plunge you may never learn how to swim.

Likewise the former approach is wrong. G-d does not want us to shun our animal soul; He wants us to get the animal soul to get excited about doing good, even if the animal soul does it for selfish reasons.

Moreover, G-d loves animals also. He created them and He wants us to treat them well. This goes for the animal in us. To be sure, G-d would love for us to be able to do everything with the most noble of intentions, thereby expressing our G-dly nature. But, to achieve that we must first start with our animal nature; feed it with spiritual nourishment.

The Ark was the Exception: Paradise on Earth

While this is true in general, there are some notable exceptions. When Noah was in the ark, it was analogous to Paradise, where all of G-d's creations co-existed harmoniously. The year Noah and his family spent in the Ark is a metaphor for existing in a totally spiritual environment. In such an environment, the G-

dly element is most pronounced and we do not have to focus on the animal within ourselves first. We could go straight to the top, nurture the G-dly soul, and then with the “trickle down” effect, our animal souls will also feel uplifted and refined.

We Are Not Schizophrenic

We are currently living in the transitional age, between exile and Redemption. One part of us, affected by the desensitizing conditions of exile, is grossly animalistic.

Paradoxically, because we are living so close to the dawn of a new spiritual age, we are also witness to an opposite phenomenon, a spiritual renaissance. Sometimes we gravitate towards the animal and sometimes we feel inspired to go in the direction of the G-dly. We are not schizophrenic.

We are products of living in a unique age that is the bridge between the dark past and the radiant future. When the animal in us is undernourished and hungry, by all means feed it. Don't neglect it. Get it excited about Judaism for its own unsophisticated reasons.

Don't hesitate to do good things even for the most ulterior of motives.

But when you feel inspired, don't hesitate to let your soul soar. By all means nurture the G-dly soul within you by studying the Mystical texts of Judaism, Kosher meditation and other spiritual pursuits. In this inspired atmosphere you don't have to focus on your animal soul; feed your G-dly soul first. It will have a positive effect on your internal, animal as well.

This approach will certainly get us prepared for the imminent coming of Moshiach when all the mysteries of Creation will be revealed and our G-dly souls will bask in the infinite light of G-d. Our animal souls will then be uplifted and transformed.

ESSAY NINE

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

A generation can be understood as a segment of time within each individual's life.

When we change our personality, focus etc. we have lived in several generations.

We were created to live life to the fullest in each of these changes/generations,

ESSAY NINE

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Qualified Righteousness

“Noach was a righteous man.” So says the Torah in this week’s parsha.

However, the Torah qualifies his righteousness by stating that he was righteous “in his generations.” What exactly does that mean? How can one be righteous in a relative sense? Either one does the right thing or does not. We can apply relativism to aesthetics, capabilities, wealth, etc. But how can we say that Saddam Hussein is a righteous man compared to Hitler?

To be sure, there are degrees of righteousness. One can be more charitable than another. One can devote more time and energy for good causes than another. However, if that is what the Torah meant to suggest that Noach was not as righteous as others, why would the Torah want to belittle the very man it was trying to praise?

Moreover, Noach lived in his own generation. Why should he be compared, and unfavorably at that, with the righteous of other generations?

Another question: Why does the Torah use the plural term “generations?”

And finally, and most importantly, we must be able to apply everything the Torah tells us to our own lives. What do we gain from the knowledge that Noach was “righteous in his generations?”

Noach was a Surfer

Noam Elimelech, a classic Chassidic work by Rabbi *Elimelech* of *Lizensk*, explains that the reference to the “generations of Noach” is a reference to the changes and vicissitudes of Noach’s own life. No matter where he was, no matter what situation he was in, Noach found a way of instilling righteousness into that segment of his journey through life. Noach did not stay on one level. He was able to surf the waves of society without drowning.

Many Generations Within Each Generation

We usually define the term generation as an expanse of time measured by one's life until his or her child is born to start a new generation. There is another definition to a generation, however. When new dimensions of life are discovered and entered into. And the later generation is begotten by living righteously in the earlier "generation" phase of one's life.

From the vantage point of this new definition of generation, Noach's life covered the expanse of many generations. For every phase of his life was comparable to a new generation.

A person who stays on one level has lived through no more than one generation. Even one who is consistently righteous but does not meet any new challenges has lived only in one generation. Only the one who seeks to constantly grow—especially by taking on new challenges—can be said to have **lived** in many diverse generations.

King David alludes to the multiple generations one goes through, in the 145th Psalm (which is recited in our prayers three

times daily) where he states: "One generation to another will praise Your work..." *Noam Elimelech* interprets this verse ingeniously: If one praises G-d's handiwork, if one appreciates the Divine character in all that one does, then one grows from one generation to the next within one's own lifetime.

What this means is that if we go through diverse experiences and see no new challenge in our life and we don't utilize the new opportunity to connect to G-d in a novel way, then our life, our righteousness notwithstanding, exists only on one plane; in one generation. W

When we, however, see G-d's hand in each and every one of life's events, regardless of their nature, then we see and live every moment of life. Considering the fact that each event has its own nuances, we have thus lived in many generations.

Thus, when the Torah submits that Noach was righteous in his generations, it does not mean to denigrate Noach's righteousness. The qualifying phrase "in his generations," rather speaks his praise that in all of the changes

that he experienced in his long life (at that point he was 500 years old!), he praised G-d; he lived his life righteously.

Multiple Generations of Modernity

In the last few decades, we have had an opportunity to go through many generations. We've lived through so many geo-political, cultural, technological and moral-climate changes.

More specifically, as a people, we have experienced many fluctuations. We are asked to follow Noach's example of righteousness. The name Noach denotes peace and connotes Messianic utopia. To further that goal we must emulate his qualities, particularly the one about taking advantage of the new challenges that arise.

In practical terms this means that with the advent of the internet, to cite one example, we must find ways of using it for promoting broader access to Torah knowledge.

We are a New Generation with a New

Mission

In the past our focus was on making the long journey through exile with the Messianic destination in the back of our minds. Today, our Torah leaders, and particularly the Rebbe, tell us:

We have arrived at our destination.

Moshiach and the Redemption are standing right in front of us. We no longer need to wait for Moshiach, rather Moshiach is now waiting for us. If we care to open our eyes and recognize the new challenge of this last “generation” by living our lives in a more complete and positive way, then we can invite Moshiach and Redemption into our lives.

ESSAY TEN

TWO BEGINNINGS

The Torah begins with the story of Creation.
But, the real beginning is the story of the
flood.

The flood represents a paradigm shift of the
Messianic Age.

The entire world will be deluged with
positive G-dly energy.

ESSAY TEN

TWO BEGINNINGS

Why Little Preparation for such a Big Parsha?

This year the Torah portion of Bereishis was read just one day after the concluding parsha of *V'zos Haberacha* was read. This is the only instance where there is such a short gap between one Torah portion and the next one. *V'zos Haberacha*, which is read in Simchas Torah, can occur either on a Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday. It never occurs on a Shabbos.

The question begs itself: Why was the Jewish calendar set up in such a way that there is never a full week between the completion of one cycle of the Torah reading and the beginning of the next cycle?

Moreover, it would seem that parsha Bereishis deserved a full week of preparation. After all, Bereishis, in many ways, is the most

important parsha of the Torah, inasmuch as:

a) It is the very beginning of the Torah, as its name underscores.

b) In addition, it discusses G-d creating the universe, one of the most fundamental principles of Judaism. Maimonides devoted a significant part of his Guide for the Perplexed to establish the principle that the Universe has a beginning and was created by G-d. In addition, Maimonides listed this belief that G-d preceded all else as one of the 13 Principles of Faith.

c) It is also one of the longest portions and covers an expanse of time from creation to the flood a period of over 1,500 years.

Certainly, then, a portion so big, quantitatively and qualitatively, should have at least as much time to prepare for as all the other Torah portions.

Three Answers

Three answers come to mind.

Jewish tradition looks at the reading and

study of Torah as an endless cycle, which is why we read the first section of Bereishis immediately after finishing the Five Books of Moses on Simchas Torah. To further appreciate this endless process, we never allow ourselves the luxury of a full week between the two portions.

Second, by limiting the gap between the two portions, we are compelled to reflect on the organic relationship between the end of the Torah and its beginning, highlighting the Kabbalistic idea found in the most ancient work of Kabbalah, Sefer Yetzirah, that “the end is wedged in the beginning and the beginning is wedged in the end.” There is a certain dynamism and powerful energy that can only be experienced at the beginning and at the end.

In terms of the Torah, the very last word of the Torah is Israel, and the very first word is Bereishis-In the Beginning. This suggests that G-d’s original thought in creation will be actualized by Israel. The Jewish nation was chosen to implement G-d’s plan for the creation.

Third, the six days of preparation before the

Shabbos Torah reading was designed to make it possible to fully digest the subject matter of the Torah. “Bereft” of these days of preparation, we find ourselves humbled at the very beginning of the Torah cycle. We can’t claim to have mastered the entirety of Torah, for we have not even begun to master its beginning. In essence, while we might cover the entire Torah in the course of a year, we actually never really began reading the Torah.

This notion is further hinted in the selection of the letter *Beis* to start the Torah. By commencing our Torah study with the second letter of the Alphabet, we imply, ever so humbly, that we have never even began learning the Torah.

In summation: The lack of a seven day period for Bereishis underscores: (a) the endless nature of Torah, (b) the intertwining of the end and the beginning of the Torah, (c) we have not even begun to study the Torah.

Thus, the first full week of preparation for a Torah reading commences this week with the reading of parshas Noach that discusses how Noach was righteous and saved from the

catastrophic flood that destroyed the entire world.

Why Morbid Beginning?

Since, the first “real” beginning of a weekly parsha, one that involves a full week of preparation, is Noach, we ought to reflect on the selection of such morbid subject matter for this beginning.

Upon deeper reflection, and based on many of the comments of our Sages in Midrashic and Chassidic literature, parshas Noach also has a positive dimension to it.

Paradigm Shift

Water in Biblical symbolism is indicative of knowledge. Water that covers the person—as in a Mikveh—Maimonides writes is symbolic of one whose entire being is submerged in knowledge. Hence the flood waters actually allude to the world going through a “paradigm shift.”

The flood endowed the world with a chance

at seeing things in a new light. In a sense, Bereishis begins all over again, as our Sages pointed out that the waters that covered the world was reminiscent of the state of the world before it was formed, covered completely with water.

Portent of the Future

Indeed, it has also been suggested that the flood is a portent of the future Age of Redemption concerning which the prophet Isaiah writes “and the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea.”

Even living for a year in the Ark with all of the animals has been likened to the original state of existence in the Garden of Eden. All of the world’s creatures lived together harmoniously. None of the animals harmed the people or other animals. This is precisely the state of affairs the prophets predicted for the Messianic Age, where the “wolf will lie with the lamb.”

Thus, underlying the tragedy of parshas Noach is also the introduction of a potential

for a new world; a world that acquired the capacity to submerge itself transform itself into a world submerged in the purifying and refreshing waters of G-dly knowledge.

ESSAY ELEVEN

THE WATERS FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

We are influenced by spiritual energy that comes from within and without.

The ultimate goal is to internalize the external influences that they become an integral part of our consciousness.

ESSAY ELEVEN

THE WATERS FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

Wish them out of Existence?

Reading the Torah's narrative about the Great Flood that destroyed the world, superficially, it reads as a story of a vengeful G-d who punishes His creations for their errant behavior. But if that was all the Torah was trying to impart to us, why the details of the flood? And furthermore, why couldn't G-d just wish the evil people out of existence? Why the need for a flood and the ark etc.?

Two Sources of Water

When we read about the flood we discover that there were actually two sources of water that flooded the Earth. There was rain from above and the fountains of the deep opened

up from below. Here too, the question can be raised why the need for both?

In truth, the flood was not just a punishment. As our Sages inform us, the waters of the flood were intended as a purification process, much like immersion in a Mikveh, which can be made of wither rain water (water from above) or spring water (water from below).

The question still remains, why the need for both sources of purifying waters? Wouldn't it have sufficed if the water came either from above or from below?

Is Everything False?

To answer these questions, let us return to the theme of last week's message. We discussed how truth cannot be accessed by utilizing the tools of the creation which were created by design to obfuscate truth. One must depend on the introduction of the Divine Commandments which transcend creation and are not tainted by the creation's penchant for falsehood.

Two questions have been raised:

First, how can we say that everything in our world is false? Isn't it preposterous to suggest that without Torah everyone and everything is false?

Second, haven't the masters of Kabbalah asserted that to find truth we must search within ourselves? Isn't it axiomatic in the writings of the Chassidic Masters that the world is inherently good and holy? Why then must we reach outside of our existence? Why not reach in?

Pre-Sinai Digging

In truth, before the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, that is precisely what the Patriarchs would do to become more G-dly; they would reach in to their soul's potential and discover the road to spiritual perfection.

At Sinai, two dynamic processes occurred simultaneously that revolutionized the way we get in touch with truth and G-dly reality.

First, G-d revealed a level of Divine reality that transcended anything that we were capable of experiencing by virtue of our own

efforts at reaching in to our souls. Now, we are able to transcend ourselves and reach heights that were heretofore elusive.

Second, when G-d declared "I am the L-rd your G-d," in the singular form, with the emphasis on the word "your," G-d "planted" this transcendent dimension of G-dly reality into our souls. From that point onward, our route to self-actualization is the same as the route to self-transcendence. Not only had Sinai introduced us to the transcendent beyond, it also exposed newly hidden depths of our beings.

The Precursor to Sinai

The flood that destroyed the world was a precursor to the revolution of Sinai. It too, came from two directions. The waters that engulfed the world came from above as well as from below. This was to prepare the worlds for a time when we would be afforded the opportunity to receive the transcendent energies from above and concomitantly reveal the hidden treasures that exist below within the core of our being.

With the advent of Sinai—to which the Flood served as a preparation—we were given the opportunity to discover the true range of experiences. By enabling us to reach beyond ourselves, we were also given the ability to discover our true selves. If we refuse to look beyond the self and connect to G-d the source of ultimate truth, we will not be capable of knowing our inner selves either. There will always be a part of us—and the most essential and profound part of us—that we are not able to access, and perhaps not even know of its existence.

To say that we need Torah and its commandments in order to experience truth is not a suggestion that we are all pathological liars without Torah. It does mean that without Torah we do not really know ourselves. We cannot get in touch with our true and most essential identities. We express only the surface parts of our personalities and the core of our souls remain helplessly covered up by layers of extraneous perceptions that belie our true feelings and inhibit our real potential.

In simple terms, when we deny ourselves the treasure that comes from G-d we

simultaneously deny ourselves the ability to—using the cliché—“get in touch with ourselves.” The real us is not what is expressed in our words and even thoughts. So everything we think, say or do is not really expressive of our real selves.

To the extent that genuine truth is measured by our ability to express our innermost desires and aspirations, the *galus*/exile has made it extremely difficult to experience this truth. Exile conditions prevents us from observing many of the Divinely ordained commandments, such as the commandments that are associated with the Temple in Jerusalem. As a result, Galus conditions have made it difficult, if not impossible, to express our soul's true feelings.

See the Rain and Well Waters

Thus, the process of Redemption that we have been praying for ever since the destruction of the Temple is for a time that will allow us to see the “rain” descending from Above, and the swelling of the waters of the deep from below.

The Messianic Age will thus open up the floodgates of G-dly awareness and deluge the world with G-dly knowledge, making the most transcendent accessible and simultaneously enable us to reach into the deepest recesses of our souls and access genuine and ultimate truth.

As a preparation for that age, the Zohar made a prediction that in the last few centuries (referring to the 18th or 19th centuries) the world will experience floodgates of knowledge below and the knowledge from above. This has been interpreted to mean that the world will experience an explosion of the deepest mystical teachings of Torah that will be mirrored by an eruption of scientific knowledge.

Indeed, this prediction has come true before our eyes. In the last two centuries the world has witnessed the proliferation of the mystical teachings, particularly through the popularization of Chassidic teaching. We also have seen the exponential growth of scientific knowledge, which was intended to be used to assist us in our mission to make the world

deluged with G-dly knowledge, as a prelude to the Messianic Age.

ESSAY TWELVE

A LOGICAL FLOOD AND A FLOOD OF LOGIC

**We are accustomed to the two categories of
rationality and irrationality.**

**In truth, there is a third category of Supra-
rationality.**

**This dimension informs our rationality and
guides it in the right direction.**

ESSAY TWELVE

A LOGICAL FLOOD AND A FLOOD OF LOGIC

Justification for the Flood

Each and every Torah portion deals with the struggle of good versus evil, right versus wrong. In this week's Torah portion this struggle is dramatized beyond all other portions. G-d says He cannot tolerate the level of evil and He must therefore destroy the world.

To justify the destruction of the world, the Torah, in the end of last week's parsha, states:

G-d saw that man's wickedness on earth was increasing, and every thought which came from his heart throughout the day was purely evil.

G-d's logical argument for destroying the world was that man was so thoroughly evil that he cannot be redeemed.

Rationale for No More Floods

In the aftermath of the flood, when Noach offered sacrifices and G-d then promised Noach that He would never bring another devastating flood to destroy the earth like this one, G-d gives the following explanation:

I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. I will never again kill all living things as I have done.

It is interesting to note that the reason for G-d's desire to destroy mankind was his penchant for evil, and the reason He swore never to destroy mankind again was because of his obsession with evil from his very youth!

This change of attitude by G-d is remarkable. First G-d sees the pervasiveness of evil as a rationale to destroy mankind, and then He

sees it as a reason to never again destroy mankind. How do we reconcile the 180 degree change in G-d's reasoning?

If this was a human being who changed course then one might have said that his logic was clouded by a "bribe" he might have received. But G-d cannot be influenced by a human offer of a sacrifice. Why then, or how then, did G-d change His mind and use the logical argument the opposite way it was used previously?

Is Logic Logical?

In truth, this reversal is an indication of how logic is influenced and informed by something that is above logic.

There are two opposing views of the role of logic and reason in our lives. Some say that logic and reason are absolutes. There are no grey areas except where there is a lack of knowledge. But if our minds were allowed to think clearly, unimpeded by emotional attachments and other pressures, we would always know how to act.

Standing on the crossroads not knowing which way to turn is a product of a lack of knowledge. If the knowledge is there and our thought processes are sharp, we can never be led astray.

The diametrically opposite view is that logic is subjective, relative and transient. What I think is absolutely right may be right to me, but in **your** world of logic it may completely wrong. Alternatively, this approach could claim, that what is logical today is not necessarily going to be logical tomorrow.

The logic used by G-d to both condemn the world of humanity and then be used to defend humanity, would suggest that logic is fickle, or, at the very least, subject to change.

The Third Approach

In truth, there is a third approach; the approach of Torah, as it is illuminated by the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidic thought.

If we had to create a hierarchical structure of human faculties, we would place intellect above emotion, and emotion above action. In

effect, we have placed intellect above all other human faculties.

Judaism accepts this order with one significant caveat. While intellect is above emotion and emotion ranks above action, there is something that transcends logic as well. G-d is the Creator of logic and cannot be bound by it. And while G-d gave logic a certain sense of supremacy, G-d is and is beyond that logical conclusion and is capable of introducing us to that trans-rational dimension.

For example, Passover, generally thought of as the time when G-d “passed over” the Jewish homes as He targeted the Egyptian ones, is seen in a much deeper light in the mystical tradition. G-d transcended His own system of logic which might have dictated that some of the Israelites should have been subjected to the same fate as their Egyptian counterparts. G-d, however, “passed over” and overrode His own system and spared the Israelites the fate that could have awaited them if logic would have prevailed.

Similarly, here, after Noach offered the sacrifices to G-d, he “touched” and activated

the transcendent G-dly dimension that can use the same logic for destruction and transform it into a compelling argument for never again inflicting such devastation.

It is interesting to note that the name of G-d used mostly throughout the Flood saga is *Elokim*, denoting G-d of the natural order. When Noach offers his sacrifices and when G-d responds favorably to them, the essential name of G-d is employed (known in Hebrew as *Havaye*), the one that connotes G-d's transcendence over time and space.

Logic a G-d Given Tool

This is not a suggestion that Judaism does not value logic. On the contrary, the belief in a trans-rational G-d, is an affirmation that logic and reason are eminent creations of G-d to be the tools for us to make the world a better and more G-dly place. But in order for logic to be constructive rather than destructive, there must be an effort to “reach out” and “touch” the transcendent aspects of our souls, and not become overly intellectualized. When we do that, the

intellect helps us rebuild our world. The logic compels us to build and not destroy.

The Modern Age of Paradoxes

We live, paradoxically, in the most intellectual and anti-intellectual age. Both attitudes leave us vulnerable to isms that can destroy our world. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we've seen how the age of reason gave us the most lethal and murderous ideologies, including communism and Nazism.

The anti-intellectual evil is now threatening the world with its own brand of totalitarianism and annihilation, G-d forbid.

We now need a "Noach," whose name is related to the word Menachem, the name the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 98b) assigns to Moshiach, meaning "the comforter," to introduce us to the trans-rational (not rational and not anti-rational) dimension, which will, in turn, usher in an age of peace and goodness that will be highlighted by the advanced level of knowledge of G-d. It will be a state of existence that is compared by the prophet Isaiah as a deluge of knowledge.

By harnessing the Moshiach aspect of our soul, the trans-rational state of consciousness that we all possess and is revealed when we pray, study Torah or perform a Mitzvah, we become the Noach's who transform the destructive flood compelled by logic into a flood of G-dly and goodly knowledge

ESSAY THIRTEEN

THE THREE TIERS OF TORAH AND PRAYER

**In troubled times we seek refuge in
entertainment.**

**Torah and Tefilah (prayer) are the ultimate
refuge because they can relate to us on every
level.**

ESSAY THIRTEEN

THE THREE TIERS OF TORAH AND PRAYER

Enter the Box!

The Ark, Noach built that saved humanity and the rest of the earth's inhabitants from extinction, is referred to in the Torah as a *Teivah*, which literally means a box or a word. A *Teivah* is a container. A box can contain objects and a word contains an idea, and the Ark contained representations of all parts of creation.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that the *Teivah* is also a reference to the words of Torah and prayer. These words are the ultimate container, for they contain much more than ideas. The words of Torah contain G-dly truths and the words of prayer convey the language of the G-dly soul and the means through which we can communicate with G-d.

The analogy of the Ark to Torah and prayer has been taken a step further. Just as Noach's Ark saved the world from the devastating flood waters, so too, the words of Torah and prayer protect us from the destructive influences that surround us all the time.

One can take this analogy yet one step further. The Ark, the Torah relates, consisted of three stories. The Torah refers to them as: "Bottom, second and third [stories.]" The Talmud, cited by Rashi, describes the purpose of these three tiers: The upper tier was for humans, the middle one for animals and the bottom one was for the refuse.

Torah and prayer can likewise be said to consist of three tiers. Let's begin with Torah:

Guide for Life

Torah, on its most basic level is a day to day guide that instructs us how to live our lives; how to be civilized in an uncivilized world; how to deal with the most degenerate of people and situations. It is analogous to the function of the bottom of the Ark in that it must relate even to those aspects of life that

are likened to refuse. This level of Torah is relevant in every segment of society, including even its most uncouth and uncivilized members. This is the Torah that commands us not to commit murder and adultery along with the more lofty precepts.

The Blueprint

On a higher level, Torah is a heavenly teaching that is the blueprint of the universe. In the words of the Zohar:

“G-d looked into the Torah and created the world; similarly, a person studies Torah and sustains the world.”

The Torah is more than just a guide for life it is the very source of life. Nothing in life can possibly be inconsistent with Torah since Torah embodies the Divine energy that created life and is what sustains it.

This approach to Torah study assists us in dealing with the “animal” or the natural forces within us.

One of the greatest challenges to sustained devotion to our highest ideals is the

erroneous perception that the Torah's demands can be at odds with our needs and desires that we perceive as being part and parcel of our nature. How often do we hear people responding to a challenge to grow up and maintain a different moral standard? "I can't change; this is who I am..." In other words, we find our human nature to be in conflict with the ideals of the Torah.

In effect, this second level of Torah relates to our nature. Torah dictates that the entire universe—macro or micro—is animated by the Torah and will ultimately conform to the Torah's ideals. There can be no inherent conflict between Torah and nature because Torah is the very source of nature.

G-d's Delight

There is yet a third and higher level of Torah: Torah that is G-d's wisdom and delight. It transcends the heavenly as it does the earthly. It is beyond even referring to it as the source of all of existence. Just as G-d is more than a Creator, so too, Torah in its essence is more than merely a G-dly force within creation.

Just as G-d transcends His creation so does the Torah.

This level of Torah is its highest tier and only the G-dly soul within man can appreciate this level. This is the level of Torah that has no purpose and function other than to experience unadulterated Divine wisdom.

This is the level of Torah that expresses unmitigated Divine delight.

In troubling times, people take refuge in entertainment because it touches their sense of pleasure and delight and blocks out the sadness and misery.

Torah, as the ultimate source of delight is therefore the ultimate refuge.

Three Tiers of Prayer

According to the Chassidic Master, Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl, there are three tiers within prayer that parallel the three tiers of Noah's Ark.

Bottom Tier: Getting out of the Quagmire

The bottom tier of prayer is the one that emanates from those who find themselves in a spiritual quagmire. They feel that they cannot get close to G-d because they are so far gone; they have degenerated to the very abyss. This individual, therefore, will cry out to G-d in anguish: "Please have mercy on my soul that has strayed so far! Without Your help I am lost. Please save me!" This heartfelt plea is prayed with a broken heart and a humbled spirit. This individual makes no pretenses to be worthy of anything. He or she simply throws himself or herself at G-d's mercy and pleads for Him to "schlep" him or her out of their self-made morass.

King David alluded to this form of prayer in his Psalms as the "Prayer of the Poor." It is the prayer from a broken spirit; from one that is humbled and shattered. It is represented by the bottom level of the Ark that contained the waste products.

David's Prayer

The second level of prayer is alluded to in the Psalms as the “Prayer of David.” It is the prayer of those who are engaged in the struggle between their G-dly nature and the pull of their animal nature. It is the level of prayer in which we beseech G-d to give us the moral strength to overcome the trials in our lives to enable us to conform to G-d’s ideals and not succumb to the temptations created by the material world in which we are situated.

This is the prayer of a person who is struggling with his or her animal nature.

Moses’ Prayer

The highest tier of prayer, however, is the one referred to in Psalms as the “Prayer of Moses.” His was not a prayer of a broken spirit and from one who is distant. And it did not emanate from a state of spiritual impoverishment. Nor was it a prayer that expressed a struggle with his nature.

Moses’ prayer was one of spiritual wealth. Moses’ prayer was a request to experience

even higher levels of G-dly light than those to which he had been exposed in the past.

Moses prayed to “show me Your glory.” Moses’ final prayer was for him to enter the Holy Land so he can attain even higher levels of observance of the Mitzvot and G-dly awareness. Moses also prayed for others who were in need of forgiveness and assistance. Moses did not have to pray to shore up his defenses and strengthen his nature. Moses’ prayer was on the highest tier: to experience the highest levels of G-dly light.

Three Tiers of the Bais Hamikdash

The Ark is also a model of the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple. There too we can find three tiers which correspond to its three primary sections.

The outer courtyard featured the Altar upon which sacrifices were brought. One of the functions of the sacrifices was to bring atonement for those who were sinking in the quicksand of sin. The Altar was placed outside the Sanctuary proper to indicate that

it was intended for even those who were outside their soul's choice location.

The second section was the actual Sanctuary which housed the Inner Altar for incense, the Menorah and the Table. This section was intended for those "insiders" who engaged in an inner struggle.

The third section is the Holy of Holies which housed the Ark that contained the Tablets. This innermost sanctum paralleled the innermost dimension of Torah and prayer, where the only dynamic was one's unification with G-d.

Three Tiers of Moshiach

Among all of our prayers, the one in which we pray for Moshiach contains elements of all three levels of prayer:

Moshiach will bring Jews from all remote places back to Israel. The meaning of remote in this context is not just geographic, but also in terms of their spiritual location. Even the most degenerate or alienated and assimilated Jew will return in the Messianic Age. No

matter how far one has strayed from the ideals of Judaism, morality and decency, he or she will be brought back.

Moshiach will also be the spiritual role model and mentor that will help reveal our G-dly soul's light so that we can overcome all of the temptations of our animal soul. Ultimately, in the later stages of the Messianic Age, we will experience the cessation of all forms of evil. We will deal evil a **final** blow and the war against evil will be won.

And finally, the Messianic Age will introduce us to the most sublime manifestations of the Divine. We will climb the heights of holiness and our challenge will not be with evil, but with the challenges of greater achievement.

In effect, when we pray for Moshiach we are combining all three tiers of the Ark. and is therefore the most complete form of prayer.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

IT'S HOW YOU DRINK!

Imbibing alcohol has always been a societal scourge.

However, the metaphor of drinking wine to elicit Divine secrets has always been the deeper reason for the role of wine in our religious rituals.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

IT'S HOW YOU DRINK!

Alcoholics Not so Anonymous

The first person we know of that had a drinking problem was our ancestor Noach. Upon his departure from the ark—after the flood had devastated the world—Noach, the Torah tells us in this week's parsha, planted a vineyard, got drunk, exposed himself, cursed the son/grandson who reveled in his father's/grandfather's shame and blessed his other two sons for covering him up a most respectful fashion.

What in the world was going on?

Why would Noach, about whom G-d says was a “perfectly righteous man,” degrade himself so by drinking wine and getting inebriated?

And why did he see fit to plant a vineyard, of all things, in the first place?

The Art of Wine Making

One approach to this enigma requires of us to examine the properties of the grape and the process of wine making. When we do that we shall see how the grape, and winemaking and the drinking of wine and its effects convey a message that would be indispensable for anyone who wants to save the world or begin a new world.

A grape looks like any other innocent fruit. However, in that grape lies the potential to produce the world's most popular drink—wine! It is the drink about which the Biblical text states: “It brings joy to G-d and people.” It is the beverage that we use to usher in the Shabbat and every major Jewish holiday. One gets married, and enters into the most important phase of one's life, with a cup of wine. Mourners, in the olden days, would be given wine.

Torah Secrets

Wine is the symbol of the secrets of Torah that will be fully revealed in the Messianic Age. The Talmud states that when wine enters a person the secrets come out. Indeed, the Talmud informs us, the numerical value of the Hebrew word for wine—Yayin—is the same as the Hebrew word for secret-Sod.

The grape—and the wine made from it—is a metaphor for the ability to realize our G-d given potential. Embedded within the grape is the juice that will eventually become wine and when imbibed will “force” one’s secrets to emerge. Wine represents our ability to realize our full potential. The effects of wine symbolize the potential we have to accomplish things that we would never have imagined possible.

When we survey all of the problems that beset the world, there are those who would point to the violence, promiscuity, hatred, hunger, sickness, and greed among the primary negative forces with which humanity struggles. And most would agree that our challenge is to combat these forces.

The Overarching Problem

It may be suggested that Noah's obsession with planting a vineyard and drinking wine was his way of suggesting that the world has an even greater, overarching need. And if this need would be addressed, Noah thought, all the other societal problems would be solved as well. Noah believed that what destroyed the world was not this or the other vice, in and of themselves. These vices were actually symptoms of a far more destructive force.

What Noah perceived was that when people fail to actualize their potential, when people do not realize how good they could be and how much they can accomplish; there is nothing that can stop the onslaught of evil in all of its incarnations.

Conversely, when we realize our full potential and recognize the incredible good we possess, it empowers us to overwhelm any evil. When a person denies his or her own uniqueness, it is not humility or cute; it is nothing less than a crime against humanity and against G-d! It is a crime against G-d because it is a denial of G-d's gift to us and/or a failure to express gratitude for these exquisite gifts.

It is also a crime against humanity, not only because it withholds from them the resources the world sorely needs, but also because it enables the forces of evil to rule unopposed.

By planting the vineyard and drinking wine, Noach was attempting to teach the world—by way of the symbol of the vineyard, the process of manufacturing wine, and its powerful effects—what a person can accomplish.

His intoxicated state was supposed to be a way of demonstrating to the new world what hidden talents and virtues lie dormant waiting to be awakened and how they can alter one's personality. If we only knew what potential we have, there is no limit to the good we can accomplish and the evil that would be banished. Noach wanted a world that was intoxicated with goodness and holiness.

Misguided Execution

Noach was actually correct in his desire to show the world the power of wine as a metaphor for the world to follow. He was

misguided, however, in the execution of his plan to teach the world the power of human potential.

While the human being has incredible, untapped reserves of ingenuity and goodness that can be harnessed for the benefit of humanity, if we do not possess the guidelines how we should reveal this potential, we may actually discover that the hidden potential activated is more frightening than the surface evil.

There is no question that discovering and actualizing our potential is the most powerful weapon in our arsenal against evil, and in the pursuit of G-d's plan to make this world a "dwelling place" for Him. But, good-intentions alone do not suffice, particularly when we are dealing with the delicate nature of the human condition.

Water not Gas

Years ago a Jewish community was digging a well for a Mikveh when they discovered that they unintentionally tapped into a well of natural gas... Instead of the purifying, life

sustaining waters of a well that would provide the Mikveh with the means to instill spiritual purity into those who immerse in it, they accessed toxic fumes that could have cause catastrophic results.

One must know how to dig deep into the recesses of the heart and soul. We must have the right instruments. One must know when and how to bare their soul.

Noach's intoxicated state led him to disrobe – literally and figuratively – in a manner that brought him shame and degradation instead of nobility and holiness. And his misguided adventure into drinking led to the downfall of others as well.

This is why G-d gave us the Torah replete with hundreds of commandments-Mitzvot. A Mitzvah performed in accordance with the Torah's guidelines is the safest and most efficient way to reveal the secrets of our soul and actualize the G-d given potential we all possess.

The “Wine of Torah”

There is yet another safe and direct way to access the hidden dimensions of our soul and awaken the dormant powers we possess. It is through the “Wine of Torah.” This refers to the study of the deeper, mystical teachings of Judaism that are part of Kabbalah and Chassidic traditions. These spiritual teachings, when taught and studied properly, are the means to reveal the secrets of our soul.

Indeed, one of the main features of the Messianic Age is that the Moshiach, a human being and Jewish leader, will become the preeminent teacher of Torah – specifically, the “Wine of Torah” – to all. That will be the force that will bring sanity and unprecedented, powerful goodness to the world. Noach’s good intentions will be realized without the attendant misery that ensued from his misadventure. Instead the world will bask in the newly revealed G-dly light and enlightenment.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

WHO EATS FIRST?

We have a win-win situation when we our G-dly soul's altruism and selfless attitude partners with our Animal soul's selfish motives in doing good.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

WHO EATS FIRST?

An Apparent Contradiction

When G-d tells Noach to bring food into the Ark for the duration of the flood, He phrases it in the following manner:'

And take for yourself from every edible food and bring it in with you. It will be for you and for them to eat.

Commentators observe that the Torah mentions the people first and then the animals in this context. This seems to be at odds with a subsequent Biblical statement that says: "Provide grass in your field for your livestock, you will eat and be satisfied."

In this verse the Torah prefaces the feeding of the animals before the feeding of the people. The Talmud infers from this that one must first feed their animals before feeding themselves. Why then was Noach told to bring food for the people first and then for the animals, implying that the people took

precedence with respect to their feeding?
(See essay eight for a slightly different approach.)

Noach's Unique Role

A simple answer to the question lies in the unique role Noach played. Noach was charged with the responsibility to save the world's human and animal population from extinction. His entire *raison d'être* was feeding the animals. Indeed, Rashi, citing the Midrash, mentions that he was hurt by a lion for delaying his feed **one** time. Noach, according to the Midrash, was spitting blood and groaning from the tedious work.

Noach was as conscientious a provider for the animals as one can imagine. There was certainly no need to tell him to feed the animals first. The reason why the Torah exhorts us to feed the animals first is to avoid the possibility that we might be lax in their feeding and thereby cause them pain and suffering. Noach did not have to be told to be aware of that possibility considering that his whole life's work was to ensure the well-being of the animals.

Fasten Your Own Oxygen Mask First!

One can add to this explanation. Considering the fact that there were only eight adults aboard and who knows how many thousands of animals, it was crucial for the adults to be healthy and strong enough to take care of so many animals. It is like the airline safety message that we should first fasten our own oxygen mask and then our children's.

The message is that sometimes being selfish is the most selfless thing we can do. There are times when we are so preoccupied with helping others that we neglect our own health, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The lesson we learn from Noach is that when we are embarking on an emergency mission to save the world from a calamity we must make sure that we are strong and up to the mission.

Furthermore when we know that our entire purpose in life is to succeed in that mission we do not have to be not to neglect those whom we are dedicated to helping.

Two Personalities

To better understand the foregoing difference between the two verses we ought to analyze the human psyche from a mystical/psychological perspective.

We possess two personalities. We are animated by what is termed either a natural, vital or animal soul, which, in many respects is no different from the external animal. This animal soul has many wants and needs and will go to almost any length and extreme to procure them. Its wants and needs are physical and materialistic. The animal soul is selfish and narcissistic.

The G-dly soul also has needs and desires. However, its needs and desires are rooted in a sense of selflessness; a desire to reach higher and transcend one's temporal existence. The G-dly soul seeks to give more than it wishes to take. While the animal soul will also give, it gives so it can eventually receive, whereas the G-dly soul takes so it can give.

When we are charged by the Torah with the responsibility to feed others first and then ourselves—it refers to the person whose

animal soul and selfish nature predominate. The animal soul—in order for it to do good—must first be on the receiving end. The animal soul says: “why should I help? What’s in it for me?” We must nurture that selfishness as a means to get the animal to get used to giving so that giving becomes a more permanent part of its personality. One can eventually get the animal to become selfless. One’s nature can be refined to be more caring and compassionate.

Harbinger of Messianic Age

However, when Noach was charged with the responsibility to gather all of life into the relatively small ark, our Sages tell us it was a harbinger of the Messianic Age when all of the world will be in a state of harmony and peace. People will get along with other people. Nations will be at peace with other nations and even animals will peacefully co-exist with both other animals and people. A model and foretaste of that utopian life existed in the ark.

When we ask the question what is it that will allow for such peace and harmony in the future?

The answer is that the G-dly soul will be the dominant part of our personalities. Kindness and selflessness will come natural. Our struggle will be to balance the different virtues when they intersect. Moreover, we will always be challenged to rise above our good personality to be even better. Constant self-transcendence and balance will be our challenge.

In a world like that—where the G-dly soul predominates—one can afford to act “selfishly”—by feeding oneself first and then the animal. One does not have to be concerned that their focus on themselves will be at the expense of others. When a person is driven by their G-dly nature even when their actions appear self-centered they are really acting exclusively for the interest of others.

Thus Noach was able to reverse the order that was designed for pre-Messianic imperfect animal souls that requires one to feed the animals first and then the people.

For Noah—in the Messianic mode Ark—there was no such thing as selfishness.

The Paradox of Our Age

In the modern day and age, we are witness to a paradoxical phenomenon. There is more selfishness than ever before and there is more selflessness than ever before.

As we are making the transition from the period of exile into the Messianic Era, we can experience both phenomena.

The rationale for this paradoxical situation is threefold:

First, in order to maintain a sense of balance in the world, whenever there is a surge of positive energy, there will also be an upswing in the parallel negative direction.

Because we are closer to the time of utter selflessness, selfishness is now also asserting itself.

Second, because we are about to enter the age when selfishness will become obsolete, the forces of evil are mounting their last

stand; attempting to salvage at least selfishness, hoping that it would lead us down the slipper slope to doing evil.

Third, G-d has given us the opportunity to transform the animal within by getting the animal soul to partner with our G-dly soul, albeit for different reasons.

It is therefore our task and mission to do both: discipline the animal soul to give, and allow the G-dly soul that is waiting to emerge and take over to express itself fully.

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ESSAY SIXTEEN

RAIN AND SHINE

Jerusalem is the most hotly contested place in
the world.

Yet it has no natural resources.

It's resource is its unparalleled balance of rain
and shine;

The fusion between the material and the
spiritual

ESSAY SIXTEEN

RAIN AND SHINE

A Time for Rain

At this time of the year rain seems to be a major focal point:

- (a) We just came from the Holiday of *Shemini Atzeres* when we pray for rain.
- (b) This week's parsha is all about the devastating flood that destroyed virtually all of life on this planet that was caused by rainfall that lasted for forty days and forty nights.
- (c) The new month that we are entering into is named Marcheshvan. The prefix "mar" means drops, because this is the month of rain.
- (d) Moreover, in classical Hebrew the fall and winter seasons are referred to as "the season (or: days) of rain."

So important was/is the need for rain that the High Priest's prayer upon exiting the Holy of Holies on the holiest day of Yom Kippur was for rain, and that G-d should not heed the prayers of the travelers who dislike the rain.

Two Metaphors

Rain in Hebrew is *geshem*, which also can be rendered as "material" or "physical." Indeed, rain is the source of and therefore symbolizes all our material blessings.

The sun, on the other hand, though it is also responsible for all of our physical existence is generally viewed as a metaphor for G-dly light. Light in general is the most spiritual form of physical matter and is therefore an appropriate metaphor for the truly spiritual energies that emanate from G-d.

There are places in the world where the sun's influence is so intense that there is minimal or no rainfall, such as in the deserts. These arid regions do not allow for much physical existence. And conversely there are the jungles or "rainforests" of the world that are

so named because they receive very little sunshine, and are inundated with constant precipitation. These areas are likewise uninhabitable by humans, yet they are teeming with myriad forms of animal life.

A Perfect Balance

Where do humans thrive? In those areas where there exists a perfect balance between the two.

It is fascinating that in a recent study of an Israeli meteorologist—who finds a Biblical reference to Jerusalem's unique climate—the author demonstrates that Jerusalem, indeed, has a unique and beautiful climate because of its unparalleled ideal combination of sun and rain. According to his study, there is no other place on earth that enjoys such a perfect balance between the two.

Jerusalem!

How can we explain the significance of this rain and sun combination and its relationship to Jerusalem?

The name Jerusalem is actually a composite of two other names it was called in the past: In next week's parsha it is referred to as "*Shalem*," whereas in the following parsha—in the narrative of the Binding of Isaac—Abraham named it "*Yireh*." After he had passed the test in which he was told by G-d to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah—the eventual site of the Temple in Jerusalem—the Torah states that "he named that place 'G-d will select (*yireh*).'" This meant, as Rashi explains, G-d will eventually select this site as the place upon which His presence will be revealed and the site where offerings will be made.

When we place the two names—*Yir'eh* and *Shalem* together—it forms the composite name of "*Yir'eh-shalem*," or Jerusalem.

Thus, if we had to translate the word Jerusalem accordingly it would yield the following: "Complete awareness of G-d." In other words, Jerusalem is the city where our awareness of G-d is not compromised in any way.

Compromising G-dly Awareness

In order to understand the significance of Jerusalem let us examine the two ways one's awareness of G-d can be compromised.

On the one hand, one can forget G-d's presence and lead a totally materialistic and even hedonistic lifestyle.

Moreover, one can even degenerate to the point where they do not even act like a normal animal would. A normal animal does not do self-destructing things. Some humans will engage in such destructive behavior that they bring about their own early demise. They create a veritable jungle where only animalistic tendencies can survive and flourish.

In some cases it can degenerate to the point where this obsession with materialism will lead to torrential rains (*geshem*) in ways that cause utter destruction. And this indeed is what happened to the generation of the flood. Their total surrender to their own most base instincts on a global scale resulted in their own destruction and even the destruction of the animals that inhabited the jungle.

Material and Spiritual Hedonism

But there can be another extreme that is associated with the excessive heat of the sun. If the sun is the symbol of G-dly light, warmth and vitalizing energy, how can there be excessive sun light?

The other extreme is when people are so obsessed with their own spirituality that they forget that they were placed in this world to cultivate it, help others thrive and contribute to their surroundings both materially and spiritually.

If we are imbued with intense light and warmth, we were commanded to share it with others. Instead the 'sun' people are consumed with their own selfish spiritual interest. This concentration of G-dly heat in one place is anything but G-dly. It is actually a perversion of G-d's intent and it results in a "desert" in which no man can live.

Our challenge is to strike the Jerusalem balance between rain and shine: To allow enough G-dly light to permeate our own souls so that we spread the light and warmth throughout our environment.

When we are deluged with *geshem*—i.e., our own selfish material interests—it reflects a lack of awareness of G-d because we are preoccupied with ourselves and not with what interests G-d. But even when we bask in the “desert heat,” we are no less self-absorbed, albeit the selfish interests are of a spiritual nature. Just as there are “material” hedonists there can be “spiritual” hedonists, whose involvement with spirituality is a self-centered. The common denominator is that they are both concerned with their own gratification.

The ideal is the pursuit of the “Jerusalem principle” of having a complete awareness of G-d. We should be asking ourselves, “What does G-d want?” rather than “what do we want?” even if our wants are positive and spiritual.

To be sure there are many levels and variations of the synthesis between rain and shine. But the ideal “climate” is that of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Miracle

We can now understand what our Sages in Ethics of the Fathers had in mind when they referred to a miracle that transpired in Jerusalem:

No one ever said to his fellow, “The space is too constricted for me to stay in Jerusalem.”

Commentators note that the Sages do not say that the miracle was that it was not crowded in spite of the hundreds and thousands of Jews that would gather there during the pilgrimage festivals. Instead it emphasizes the fact that no one ever complained about the crowded conditions. What was so significant about that miracle?

In light of the above we can appreciate this miracle. Indeed, this miracle captures the true nature and uniqueness of Jerusalem. When a person is a predominantly “rain” or materialistic person he or she cannot tolerate the presence of another on his or her territory. The situation becomes even more acutely intolerable when there are multitudes of people who are encroaching on his or her turf.

Similarly, the “sun” people who try to be secluded from others so they can spend time basking (read “meditating”) in the “sun” without any disturbance from others, will not be able to tolerate their suffocating presence, especially from those who are not spiritually inclined.

However, in Jerusalem—where there is a harmonious balance between rain and shine, the physical and spiritual, because it is the city that enjoys a sense of complete awareness of G-d—no one felt any discomfort notwithstanding the multitudes that had to share very cramped quarters. Everyone felt the inherent unity; that which binds one to the other rather than that which separates.

Next Year in Jerusalem!

Since the destruction of the Holy Temple and Jerusalem close to 2,000 years ago, Jerusalem is considered to be in exile. Despite the fact that the Jewish nation is now in control of the city and has miraculously been rebuilt and rehabilitated, nevertheless, without the presence of the Holy Temple in its midst it is

still not capable of breaking out of the exile conditions that stifle its unifying power.

When we say “Next year in Jerusalem,” at the end of Yom Kippur and the Passover Seder, we mean the city that **overtly** exudes the complete, unadulterated and uncompromised awareness of G-d that enables it to harmoniously combine the rain and shine in all of its forms.

That will happen imminently with the coming of Moshiach, who, among other accomplishments, will rebuild the Temple, unify the Jewish people and restore peace and harmony to the entire world.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

FROM MINIMALIST TO MAXIMALIST

Noah was a minimalist and Abraham a
maximalist.

Both have a place in our lives.

The minimalists do the right thing; the
maximalists focus on what more and better
they can do.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

FROM MINIMALIST TO MAXIMALIST

Naming Rights

Noach, the progenitor of all humanity, was a complex person. On the one hand he is described in the most glowing terms by G-d Himself. Noach, the Torah states in this week's parsha, "was a perfect *tzadik* who followed in G-d's ways."

Yet, Noach, our Sages in the Zohar state failed to alter the ways of his fellow human beings. Not one person mended his ways to avert being destroyed by the flood. Only Noach and his immediate family were spared. Indeed, our Sages tell us that because of Noach's failure to avert the great flood, he earned the dubious distinction of having the flood named after him in the Biblical book of Isaiah!

Our perception of Noach's personality is dealt yet another blow by the Talmudic Sage, cited by Rashi, who qualifies and minimizes his greatness. Citing the very verse that extols his righteousness "Noach was a righteous man in his generation" he comments: "In his generation he was regarded as righteous. Had he lived in the generation of Abraham, he would have been regarded as inconsequential."

And yet we find that Noach is described even more glowingly in the Torah than Abraham. With respect to Noach the Torah says that he was a "perfectly righteous" person, whereas regarding Abraham the Torah states that G-d told him, "Go before Me and you will be perfect[ly righteous]." This implies that he had not yet attained that degree of completeness as Noach did.

This above presents us with a conflicting picture of Noach, especially as we compare him with Abraham.

A Study in Contrasts

Arugas Habosem, a Chassidic commentary on the Torah, explains that, in truth, G-d's telling Abraham that he was not yet a "perfectly righteous person" was an accolade and that Noah's "perfectly righteous" status was intended to point to his limited potential.

The salient difference between Noah and Abraham was that Noah did not reach out and influence others while Abraham always did. What was the cause of their difference? If one might, superficially suggest, that Noah, in his humility, did not believe in his own ability to influence others, the question would be, was Abraham less humble? Why did Abraham, think he could change people and Noah did not?

Rather, *Arugas Habosem*, argues that it was precisely because of Abraham's humility—who said about himself, "but I am merely dust and ashes"—that he saw the good in everyone else. To him, everyone was more righteous and more perfect. He looked up at everyone and sincerely believed that he could make a difference by talking to others.

Noah, by contrast, saw his own righteousness and perfection. And, indeed, he

was a perfectly righteous person, as the Torah testifies. The problem was that he was aware of his own righteousness and perfection and from that perch of perfection he looked down at everyone else with a jaundiced eye and saw their grotesque imperfections. Noah therefore concluded, quite reasonably, that changing such flawed people would prove futile.

We can now understand why G-d says to Abraham, "Go before Me and be perfect," implying that he had not yet attained perfection, even though Noah was characterized as one who had indeed reached perfection.

Noah concentrated all of his efforts realizing his G-d given potential for self-perfection. And Noah, admirably, reached that goal. His goal—and likely his potential—however, was not the world's perfection.

Abraham, on the other hand, was suffused with a sense of mission to change the world. No matter how much he strived in this direction he could never realize that elusive goal. G-d therefore tells him that he should keep on striving to attain perfection because

his work had barely begun. And, on the other hand, with every accomplishment in inspiring even one more person Abraham's own righteousness and perfection was enhanced. His life was a perpetual journey towards perfection.

Noach, an Elitist?

This analysis of the difference between Noach and Abraham leaves us with a question. How could the Torah state that Noach was a perfectly righteous individual considering the fact that he had such an elitist view of the rest of the world?

Moreover, Rashi explains that G-d told him to build the ark as a way to get people to ask questions about this venture and for him to warn them of the impending disaster so that they may repent. If so, it is clear, that G-d expected him to work on influencing others. Yet he failed to do so. How then can it be said that he was a perfectly righteous person?

Furthermore, we know that the Torah avoids saying anything disparaging about people. The Talmud (*Pesachim* 3a) states concerning

the non-kosher animals that are mentioned in this week's parsha that it employs a roundabout way of describing them so as to not use an offensive description of even a non-kosher animal! Why would the Torah concentrate on Noach's inadequate efforts and his failures?

A Process

One way of understanding this is to view all of his history as a process. At first, the world was so coarse that it could not have been rehabilitated except by way of the flood which cleansed the world. Under these circumstances, Noach could hardly be expected to change the world.

True, he was told to speak to the people, and as the Rebbe explains he did speak but not with the full empathy and conviction. That can be attributed to the fact that he was demoralized by the resistant nature of that generation. However, it may also be suggested that his half-hearted attempts at getting them to repent was a necessary first step, which ultimately led to Abraham's more

successful efforts. Noach planted the seeds for the future.

Abraham's generation, which followed the flood that brought some measure of refinement to the world, was more receptive to his message. That itself motivated Abraham to do more and to develop a much more empathetic approach towards the members of his generation.

Removal of Barriers

An even more significant barrier to the world's ability to be refined was removed after the Torah was given at Sinai.

And the closer we get to the final Redemption the world is progressively becoming more receptive to change.

Presently, as we stand on the very threshold of Redemption, the world is at its "highest point" of readiness to be totally refined even if it appears to us that the world is rather unrefined and even regressing. The reason it seems that way is to challenge us to remove the last traces of resistance to the world

becoming the G-dly world that it was intended to be.

Our generation, which the Rebbe characterized as “the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption,” is therefore the one in which we have seen the idea of outreach assume a far greater role than ever before. The unprecedented revival of Judaism after it has been spurned by so many in the modern age testifies to this dynamic process that has taken place. The hundreds of thousands of Jews who have performed the Mitzvah of Tefillin since the Six Day War—which the Rebbe referred to as the “Great Shofar” of awakening that precedes and presages the coming of Moshiach—is just one example of the enhanced receptivity and refinement of the world. And, that in turn, motivates us to do more “in-reach” to elicit the spark of the souls of so many Jews.

Incorporating the Noach Approach

And for those who do not have the passion to reach out (or in) to others they must learn the lesson from Noach who, despite his lack

of motivation and his realization that his efforts would most likely prove futile, went through the motion of speaking to the people of his generation.

We too—even when we are not motivated to help someone and we feel no empathy for them—must incorporate the “Noach approach.” Even going through the motions of speaking to others and inspiring them to do one more Mitzvah is the necessary minimal first step that we must take.

This minimalist approach assumes even greater significance now as we stand on the threshold of the final Redemption. The Rebbe quoted the Talmudic ruling, codified by Maimonides, that even one Mitzvah can bring total salvation to the world. Our intentions and feelings are extremely important, but the one Mitzvah—even if it is performed in the “Noach-minimalist” mode—can be the catalyst that will bring perfection to the world and will allow everyone to realize the maximalist state of Redemption.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

**Humans are the problem and they are the
solution.**

**We contribute to the realization of the Divine
plan for the world by just showing up.**

**We actually transform the world through
utilizing the world's resources to serve G-d.**

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

A Tautology

In the aftermath of the Great Flood that destroyed the entire human and animal population of the world except for Noach, his immediate family and a token representation of all other forms of life on earth, Noach begins the arduous task of rebuilding and repopulating the world. Upon leaving the Ark, Noach is instructed by G-d to be fruitful and multiply, the very words that were originally given to Adam soon after he was created.

The question may be asked, why the need to repeat the commandment? Why would Noach feel that the original charge given to Adam would no longer be in effect now that he had to start all over again? Wouldn't it have been obvious to him that he should encourage repopulating the earth?

Humans: The Cause of all Problems?

One simple answer to this question can be offered in light of the tendency of some who eschew bringing children into a cruel world because of a society that is bent on self-destruction. When we consider all the man-made devastation caused by violence, war, pillaging, destruction of the environment etc., we might shudder at the prospect of bringing children into such a world.

Indeed, this was the thought of none other than Amram, the father of history's greatest human being—Moses. Our Sages tell us that when Amram (the unofficial leader of the Israelite slaves in Egypt) heard of Pharaoh's decree to have all the boys thrown into the Nile, he separated from his wife. His argument was, why bring children into the world to have them thrown into the Nile?

Upon hearing of their leader's action, all of the men separated from their wives until Amram's daughter Miriam declared that his actions were worse than Pharaoh's. Pharaoh had only decreed against the males, whereas, she reasoned, Amram's actions threatened the females (that would not be born) as well.

In addition to this very sentiment that we hear expressed in our own day and age, we also hear of those who invoke Malthusian predictions of the world coming to an end because of what they term “overpopulation,” and the depletion of the earth’s resources. Humans, in their estimation, are the cause of so many problems, and “too many” humans, they believe, can only magnify the problems exponentially.

To deflect this attitude of regarding the growth of humanity as a source of misfortune, G-d therefore expressly commands Noah to propagate and populate the world. Notwithstanding the flood that just destroyed a world that was self-induced, G-d commanded him to disregard the past and start all over again.

Humans, the Solution

Human beings are often the problem but they are almost always the solution. Imagine what life would be like had the people who invented or discovered the cures for so many illnesses not been born. Imagine where we would be without the people whose G-d

given ingenuity provided us with modern technological means to feed billions with so much less effort than in earlier historical periods when the dire predictions were made.

In effect, the two commandments to be fruitful and multiply—the one addressed to Adam and the one addressed to Noach—reflect two separate situations. Be fruitful when you can see the benefits of human capital, but also be fruitful when it seems that humans are the problem. The rationale for this second commandment is that while we are the only species that can cause real harm to the world, we are also the only species that can correct our mistakes and save the world.

A Third Commandment

We still have a need to understand why—later in Genesis—we find a third commandment directed to Jacob to be fruitful and multiply. Indeed, the Talmud makes it clear that there is a special commandment directed specifically to the Jewish people to propagate. Why the need to turn this universal imperative into a parochial one?

There must be an added dimension to the need for propagation.

Thus far we have explained that human life is a mixed bag. We cause many if not most of the problems (we don't usually cause earthquakes and other "acts of G-d"), but we have the capacity to remedy them as well. Frequently, we can respond to and ameliorate the conditions that are wrought by G-d as well. Thus, human resources are the most indispensable resources that we possess.

However, this approach has one flaw in it. In this paradigm, we have a world and we have people. And there seems to be an inherent tension between the two. We plunder the earth and destroy it but we also help to cultivate the earth and reveal its treasures and remedy the things that go wrong with it. Humanity and earth seem to be in an adversarial relationship, or actually in a love-hate relationship

In truth, when G-d reintroduced the commandment to be fruitful and multiply to Jacob and the Jewish nation, a radically different understanding of what humanity is all about was introduced to the world. We

are not just resources that compete with other resources and we have to reach the conclusion that we are more valuable and therefore deserve to survive and even thrive notwithstanding the problems we cause. We are the very purpose for which the entire universe was created.

Why?

The Purpose of Creation

Mount Sinai—the mountain upon which the Torah was given and on which G-d revealed the very purpose for which we and the entire cosmos were created—introduced the reality that the world was created for us. The world was created for us to make the right choices that will thereby bring G-dly awareness and G-dly values into the world. To accomplish this there are two stages:

Stage number one is to have a civilized, inhabited world, where people use their talents and ingenuity to harness the world's resources to make it a productive, verdant, vibrant, thriving, moral and ethical world. To this end, we need a world populated by

humans to elicit its maximum potential. And this indeed was the main charge of the world before the Torah was given on Mount Sinai when the only laws that were in effect were the Seven Noachide commandments that focus on having a civilized society. Being fruitful and multiplying served that end.

At Sinai (and a “sneak preview” prior to that when G-d communicated with Jacob, the progenitor of the Jewish people who would stand at Sinai) G-d informed us that we are not just His instruments to repair the world and enable it to realize its full potential. We do that and more. We are the ones chosen to bring G-d into this civilized and vibrant world because we have been infused with G-dly energy at Sinai and that enables us to make the world into what our Sages call “a dwelling place for G-d.”

How do we accomplish this goal of making the world into a dwelling place for G-d?

This goal is also accomplished in two stages:

Showing Up

First, by just showing up.

No sooner than a baby emerges from its mother's womb, the world irreversibly changes for the good. When a G-dly soul enters the physical world and is no longer concealed and subsumed within, and nurtured by, the mother's soul, this newly independent soul comes onto the scene with an unprecedented surge of Divine energy.

Then comes stage two. This human being, in possession of a G-dly soul that was energized at Sinai—must also act in ways that are consistent with his or her G-dly soul. When we perform a Mitzvah, which means a G-dly commandment, it unleashes an unprecedented surge of G-dly energy that contributes further to the ultimate goal of making the world a “dwelling” for G-d.

In the aggregate of souls entering into the world and the accumulation of Mitzvos over time, we bring the world closer to the age when G-d's glory will fill the entire cosmos. That is what the Messianic Age is all about. It is we—not G-d exclusively—who bring about this era through showing up and living a G-dly life.

Choose Life

We can now understand Judaism's emphasis on life. The Torah asserts that human life has intrinsic value. Even if a person has no quality of life (although the definition of quality is so subjective and vague to be irrelevant in determining which and when human life should be saved) his or her life is sacrosanct. Life itself is the greatest asset because it is the presence of a Divine soul within our physical existence.

The above will also shed light on the Talmudic statement that Moshiach will come when all the souls will have left their storage place in heaven and will have entered our world. The Messianic Age is when G-d's presence will spread to the entire world. And the means to achieve this goal begins with the birth of each and every individual child.

Mazal Tov!

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE ELUSIVE FOURTH SON

Kabbalah teaches three primary personality traits.

They are all in need of the fourth dimension to seal their continuity and integrity.

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE ELUSIVE FOURTH SON

Another Son?

In the aftermath of the Great Flood that destroyed the world, the Torah records the rather strange story of how Noach planted a vineyard and became inebriated. His son Cham (usually rendered Ham) reported his father's disgraceful condition to his brothers, who hastened to have him covered. When Noach discovered what his son Cham did to him he cursed him.

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 70a), cited by Rashi, explains that Noach's extreme response to his son's uncovering his nakedness was due to the fact that Cham was not just disrespectful to his father by seeing him in his compromised state and reporting it to his brothers rather than covering his father himself. Cham actually committed a horrible crime by castrating his father. One of the

proofs that supports this oral tradition, as recorded in the Talmud, that it was a more serious crime than just seeing his father exposed is the use of the phrase “when Noach saw what his younger son did to him.” The words “did to him” imply that he did not just gaze on him but that he actually did something to him.

What was Cham’s rationale for committing this appalling act?

The Midrash, cited in a subsequent comment by Rashi, explains that Cham did not want his father to have another child. His reason was: “Adam had only two sons yet one killed the other because of the inheritance of the world and our father has three sons yet he still seeks a fourth son!”

There are several questions that arise here.

First, in the Biblical text the dispute between Cain and Abel revolved around Cain’s jealousy of Abel, whose offering G-d accepted while rejecting his brother’s offering. How does that reconcile with the Midrash’s contention that they were divided about inheriting the world?

Second, why would two people be so concerned about who owns a greater share of the world? After all, there were only four people alive at that time. Was the world not big enough for the two of them?

Third, what use to Cham would it be for Noach to be prevented from having another son? In a few generations, the world would once again be populated by multitudes of people who will have to divide it among far more than four people. What, then, did he gain by preventing his father from siring another child?

The Ideological Debate between Cain and Abel

The following is based partly on a contemporary work, *Avir Yosef*.

In truth, Cain and Abel were not concerned solely about material possessions. Theirs was not just a turf war as to who would control more territory. Obviously neither felt a need to be called the owner of the entire world when there were only four people in existence at that time. Rather, Cain and Abel

knew that they were to be the progenitors of humanity. They were also sophisticated enough to recognize that G-d placed them in this world for a purpose which would be transmitted to future generations. If G-d did not confer a universal mission on them, why did he create just Adam and Eve, who would, in turn, have just two children? This was unlike all the other creatures, which were created in prolific numbers. It was obvious to them that they, the heirs of Adam and Eve, were destined to chart the course of humanity for all posterity. It was thus their responsibility to establish societal norms and direction for the future.

It was also clear that Cain and Abel knew that their Creator wanted certain things from humanity as a *quid pro quo* for their continued existence. What precisely did G-d want from humanity? To what degree does a person have to recognize G-d's role? These questions were the real crux of their ideological differences.

In response to the challenge of these two questions, Cain inaugurated the idea of making an offering to G-d. In a crude sense, Cain's notion was like paying "protection

money” demanded by organized crime. Cain believed that if he could “pay G-d off” with a meager offering of produce (according to Rashi it was flax) that would suffice to keep G-d off the backs of humanity so it could grow independently of G-d.

In truth, Cain’s idea was not as outrageous as it seems. His calculation can be restated in a more sophisticated, but no less misguided, fashion. Cain knew that existence was to be a balance between our obligations to G-d and our own personal independence. Cain, however, believed that it sufficed to pay homage to G-d only on special occasions through special offerings. The rest of the time, he theorized, G-d would allow us to pursue our own separate interests. This, indeed, was and continues to be the belief of many people who relegate religion to holy days, holy places and holy people.

Abel, on the other hand, did not emulate Cain’s attempt to give a modest offering to G-d. It was his belief that one must be mindful of one’s obligation to G-d in every moment of life, in whichever place or situation one finds oneself. G-d, and our relationship with Him, ought not to be

viewed as a burden. G-d is not simply trying to get something from us in return for granting us our lives. G-d **is** our very life. Our recognition of Him is what makes our lives meaningful and joyful. Abel rejected the notion of compartmentalizing his relationship with G-d.

Thus, his idea of an offering was to designate the **best** of his sheep and offer it to G-d. It was his way of expressing the sentiment that it was his greatest joy to serve G-d all the time. Moreover, he did not set aside the moment of making his offering as the exclusive time for his service to G-d; it was a time for added emphasis and devotion, much like the way we observe Shabbos and Jewish Holidays in our own lives.

It was this divergence of views regarding the way humanity was to understand one's relationship with G-d that shaped their dispute about dividing up the world. Each brother sought to ensure that the future course of humanity would follow his own philosophy.

Three Ideologies

Let us return now to Cham. He saw how the ideological dispute between Cain and Abel about the future direction of humanity had proved so catastrophic. He was thus genuinely concerned about the future of the world now that three different philosophies of life were evolving.

Shem, also known as Malkitzedek, the ancestor of Abraham, was a Kohain; a man who dedicated his life to G-d and who therefore merited that his descendants would receive the Torah and build the Holy Temple where G-d would dwell.

Yafes—whose name means “beauty”—emphasized aesthetic beauty and the secular knowledge which uncovers the beauty that exists within nature. He was the progenitor of the Greeks and, by extension, Western Civilization as we know it today.

Cham —whose name means “heat”— was an advocate for hedonism, devoted to allowing one’s passions for material and sensual pleasures to dominate. Cham was the ancestor of Nimrod, who rebelled against G-d and instituted idolatry. In truth, hedonism and idolatry often go together. Pagan gods

were frequently used as projections of, and justifications for, sybaritic desires and depraved morals.

Cham was convinced that these three competing philosophies would power many struggles for supremacy in the future, as indeed they have. How could the world tolerate a fourth philosophical approach?

In truth, Cham committed crime every bit as egregious as Cain's transgression. In the interest of preventing dissent and struggle they perpetrated extreme acts of cruelty. Even if they were correct in their attempt to limit the ideologies that would vie for supremacy, the end did not justify the means.

Moreover, the very premise upon which Cain and Cham acted was flawed. They were correct in concluding that G-d's initial creation of so few humans was indeed a way of establishing societal norms for the future. They were also correct in concluding that humankind would inevitably divide into many groups with competing ideologies. They missed a crucial point, however. G-d began by creating one human being—Adam—and only later did he create Eve. This was an

indication, directly from G-d, that there is only **one** overarching ideology that must permeate the diversity and complexity of the human race and its multifarious ideas.

There is nothing wrong with having diverse ways as long as they all lead to one overarching goal. That overarching goal is at the heart of the Torah, which celebrates diversity but harnesses it to the engine that leads the world forward to its inexorable goal—The Final Redemption.

Preventing Moshiach

The Kabbalists and Chassidic literature describe the three sons of Noach as representing the three primary emotional traits of chesed-kindness, gevurah-severity and tiferes-beauty/harmony. These three traits are embroiled in eternal conflict when they are not under the direction of a Higher unifying power. When one has a clear vision of his or her destination, he or she knows when to turn right (chesed), when to turn left (gevurah) and when to go straight (tiferes).

The *Tzemach Tzedek* (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe and great-great-great grandfather and namesake of our Rebbe) explains that the fourth son that Cham denied his father would have corresponded to the Divine attribute of Malchus (royalty).

It was Noach's ardent wish that by drinking the Messianic "Preserved Wine," he would introduce the soul of Moshiach into the world.

Contrary to Cham's fearful belief, Noach's fourth child would not have introduced yet another direction, leading to even more confusion and discord. On the contrary, Moshiach, who is characterized as the "fourth leg of the Divine chariot" would have absorbed the powerful spiritual energies symbolized by the wine and would have reversed the sin of the Tree of Knowledge (which, according an opinion in the Talmud, was actually a grapevine).

Noach would have succeeded, but alas his overindulgence allowed Cham's heated aggression to frustrate the emergence of that fourth leg. The rest, as they say, is history.

The task before us in the present day is to drink that wine figuratively by studying the “Wine of Torah,” in other words, those parts of Torah that demonstrate its depth and joy and lead to Mitzvos. These are the teachings of Chassidus, which are a taste of the “Preserved Wine” that we will all drink deeply upon the imminent arrival of the “fourth leg”: Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption in his wake.

ESSAY TWENTY

NOACH'S ARK AND HAMAN'S GALLOWS

Where evil sees opportunity to destroy, the
forces of goodness see opportunity to save.

Where evil sees decline, G-dly forces see the
seeds of rebuilding.

ESSAY TWENTY

NOACH'S ARK AND HAMAN'S GALLOWS

A Board from the Ark

One of history's most famous construction projects was the building of the Noach's Ark, through which he and civilization itself were saved from the flood that destroyed every other living creature in the world.

This Ark served another purpose much later in history which is not as well-known as the Flood story. In the Biblical account, the Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat where it remains until this very day. However, according to one Midrashic account, the Ark served a crucial function close to 1,500 years later. When Haman sought to have Mordechai hanged he sent his son Parshandasa to fetch a board from Noach's Ark to use in constructing the gallows. It was on this very board that Haman himself was hanged!

Without too much probing beneath the surface we can see a correlation between these two disparate events:

The Ark saved humanity and the Ark saved the Jewish people from annihilation at the hands of the wicked Haman.

We must, however, delve even more deeply for a better understanding of the contribution of the Ark to the hanging of the Jewish nation's arch enemy, Haman. Why was it so crucial for Haman to meet his end with a remnant of the Ark? And why was Haman so intent on hanging Mordechai with this board?

Four Sources of Haman's Gallows

A survey of Midrashic literature yields at least three additional views on the source of the gallows upon which Haman was hanged.

According to Pirkei d'R. Eliezer, the lumber for the 50 cubit tall gallows was taken from the Holy of Holies, the innermost and most holy section of the Bais Hamikdash.

According to another Midrash, the gallows were prepared by G-d in the "Six Days of Creation."

According to the Talmud, Haman's name is hinted in the verse which quotes G-d's admonition to Adam: "Have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?" The phrase "*Hamin*-have...from" shares the consonants of the name Haman. Hence Haman's name is associated with the Tree of Knowledge, intimating that his gallows were connected to this infamous tree.

Haman's gallows are associated with many historical events: The first week of creation, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Noach's Ark and the Holy of Holies.

How can we thematically connect the four sources of Haman's gallows?

The Ark: "The Wolf and the Lamb"

To answer this question we must refer to Chassidic literature which compares the Ark to the future Messianic Age when the entire

world will experience total peace and unity. This phenomenon, in miniature form, existed in the Ark. The creatures and eight humans that populated the Ark coexisted peacefully. Consequently, the Ark should therefore not be viewed solely as a reminder of the destruction caused by the flood but primarily as a reminder of how perfect the world could and will be.

We can now understand why Haman wanted a board from the Ark for his gallows and why he was ultimately hanged on it. In Haman's diabolically evil mind, the Ark symbolized utter destruction and devastation. For him this bode well for the execution of his plan. Not only would the hanging of Mordechai be a victory for him, he believed that it would portend an even greater victory: extermination of Mordechai's people. Haman knew very well that the leader of a generation represents and incorporates all of the generation. Haman assumed that if he could rid himself of Mordechai the leader he could also rid himself of all of Mordechai's people. Haman reasoned that the best omen for their destruction would be for Mordechai to hang on a remnant of the Ark that symbolized and was associated with utter destruction. That

would augur well for the fruition of his diabolical plan.

Haman could not have been more wrong. The boards of the Ark symbolized the salvation of the world so that it could continue to exist and fulfill G-d's purpose in Creation. It epitomized the highest ideal of unity that characterizes the Messianic Age, when G-d's plan will come to pass. The Ark that Haman scavenged to construct his gallows, symbolized the survival of Mordecai and the Jewish people, just as the Ark allowed for the survival of the world to ensure the endurance of G-d's plan leading to the Messianic Age.

We can now see that all the opinions about the source of Haman's gallows revolve around one central point: overcoming the obstacles to the fulfillment of G-d' plan for the world.

In the Beginning

The gallows that abruptly ended Haman's attempt to destroy the very people chosen to implement G-d's plan for Creation, originated in the very act of Creation. When G-d created the world, He did it so that the world would

eventually become a dwelling-place for G-d. It stands to reason that every major event associated with His Master Plan was already implicit in the very first week of Creation. This is similar to a human builder who sets forth the goal of his project at the very outset. In addition, he plans at the start for any contingent elements necessary for the project's ultimate success.

During the first week of Creation G-d established that the purpose of Creation was Bereishis. Rashi translates this opening word to mean "**Because of** the two primary entities, Torah and Israel, G-d created the world." The purpose of Creation will be fulfilled when Israel receives and then fully implements the Torah, the Master Plan for existence.

However, in order for the Jewish people to execute G-d's plan they must survive. We recite in the Haggadah, "In every generation they stand up against us to destroy us." However, the conclusion of that refrain is, "and G-d saves us from their hands." The instrument of G-d's salvation of the Jewish people and continuation of His plan for the world must be present in the very genesis of

the Creation. And, indeed, it was present in the creation of the gallows upon which Haman, the scion of Amalek, would be hanged. This outcome demonstrated that all the other “Haman’s” of the world would fail too. The power that guarantees this salvation has been present since the very beginning of existence. This powerful fact drives the Midrash’s statement that the Ark board came into existence during the Six Days of Creation.

The Test

Once the world was completed by the creation of Adam and Eve, G-d gave humanity, to whom he would eventually entrust His Master Plan, a test commandment: Do not eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The disobedience of Adam and Eve set back the timetable for implementation of G-d’s Master Plan. Indeed, from that time onward, everything seemed to have gone downhill until the time of the Great Flood. Here we can detect a “Haman” effect: the undermining of G-d’s Master Plan. This is the reason we associate Haman with

the Tree of Knowledge and Adam and Eve's partaking of it.

However, as bad as their transgression seemed to be in terms of frustrating G-d's will, there was a silver lining, or perhaps even more, a hidden blessing.

If evil had not mixed with good in our world as a result of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, there would have been no challenge for humanity to overcome and the world would not have been the lowly world in which G-d desires to dwell.

Indeed, the Midrash describes G-d's purpose for Creation as a desire to dwell in the "lowliest" of realms. That suggests that He wanted a world that harbored evil, and that by following His Master Plan we are intended ultimately to overcome this evil.

Our triumph over evil will make this world an inviting world for G-d. This entire episode, therefore, can be seen as the seeds for the narrative of Mordechai's salvation rather than the threat to him.

Rehabilitation

The next stage in G-d's Master Plan was the Flood. On one hand, it destroyed the evil that had permeated the Earth up to then and prepared the world for its rehabilitation. Towards that end, G-d gave Noach the so called "Seven Noachide Commandments," which are geared to making this a civilized and habitable world. This set of basic commandments served as preparation for Sinai, when G-d would give Israel His Master Plan: the Torah. And, as stated, the Ark was a model of what the entire world would look like when the Master Plan is finally implemented in the Messianic Age.

Hence, the hanging of Haman — who represented the greatest threat of his age to the Master Plan, with his diabolical plan to hang Mordechai and annihilate the entire Jewish people — can be traced back to Noach's Ark. The Ark and the gallows both reversed a potential for evil to challenge and frustrate G-d's plan.

Finally, the Midrash which states that Haman's gallows were built with materials

taken from the Holy of Holies can be understood in light of the foregoing analysis.

The gallows that destroyed Haman represents the force that will enable us to rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, the place where G-d's presence was pronounced, and is the paradigm for G-d's expectation for the entire world.

Haman saw a Temple in ruins and thought use of its remains would ensure his success in further destroying G-d's plan. G-d saw it, contrarily, as a sign that His plan for the world to become His dwelling place would indeed come to fruition.

Our Sages teach us that the destruction of the seed of Amalek will precede the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash. It is from the Bais Hamikdash that the G-dly spirit will spread to the entire world, which will finally resemble the Ark with its peaceful and unified atmosphere.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

EYES ON THE GOAL

There are two approaches to life:

The first is to have a singular focus.

The second is to accumulate a multitude of
experiences.

Even when following the second approach,
we must never lose sight of the goal.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

EYES ON THE GOAL

Personification of Righteousness

Noach was the symbol of righteousness. No other person is described in the Torah as a “**perfectly** righteous” person. Righteousness is defined as one who does everything right; no deviation to the right or the left.

It turned out that his obsession with being righteous was both strength and weakness. Because he was so “straight” he did not know how to “go out” of his personality, seek out people of differing natures and speak to them with empathy to mend their ways so that the Flood could have been averted. Tellingly, the Zohar characterized the Flood as “Noach’s flood” because of his failure to prevent it.

Noach was a product of the natural world, where every creature is fixed in its mold with little wiggle room to expand and go out of its

own nature. Noah was truly not at fault. In G-d's plan, the pre-Sinai dynamic did not allow one to break out of his or her boundaries.

Abraham, by contrast, was the first to break away from the constraints of his nature. As we will read in next week's Torah portion, G-d told Abraham to leave his "land, his birthplace and his father's house." Chassidic teaching interprets this as a need for Abraham to break away from his natural instincts and the mold from which he was cast by virtue of his upbringing and environment.

Although Abraham lived in the pre-Sinai era, his life was a necessary precursor to the Revelation at Sinai. His efforts paved the way for Sinai and for us to break out of our mold, particularly, the Galus prison to which we are still confined.

Abraham the First Jew; not Noah

We can now understand why, as Jews, we trace ourselves back to Abraham and not to

Noach. Being Jewish requires us to break out of our own molds.

The question now arises. If Abraham is our preeminent role model, and we trace ourselves back to him rather than to Noach, why do we spend an entire week focused on Noach? True, he was a model of righteousness, but so were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why do we need to study an apparently unsuccessful model of righteousness this entire week?

Singular or Plural?

The answer to this question can perhaps be found in the manner in which the Torah sums up his life:

And all the days of Noach **was** nine hundred fifty years...

Although, referring to all of his days, the Hebrew original uses the term "*vayehi*-was," which is in the singular tense. Why is this?

The question is even more nuanced when we compare this verse to the way in which the

Torah sums up the lives of others. We can see that Noach is a special case.

Take for example, the way the Torah sums up the life of Adam:

All the days that Adam lived **were** nine hundred and thirty, and he died.”

Here the Torah uses the plural form “*vayihyu-were*.”

Why would the Torah deviate from the correct grammatical rule concerning the days of Noach and use the singular form of *vayehi*?

Two Approaches

The answer, perhaps, lies in Noach’s unique contribution to our lives, which justifies the need for us to learn of, and place so much attention on, his life.

There are two valid ways we can live our lives within the framework of Judaism. But following only one of these approaches can leave us deficient in our role as Jews.

The first approach, which we will call the Noach approach, is singular. Every aspect of our lives is attuned to one overarching goal. It is like being on a journey with our minds focused solely on our destination and how we will get there. There is no time or room for sight-seeing. Going off the road, even momentarily, for some extra-curricular activities (meant in a positive vein) is out of the question. Every ounce of our strength, every faculty of our soul and limb of our body, every personality trait, has to be attuned to realizing our mission.

The second approach is the opposite. As we journey along the highway of life, we take advantage of every sight along the way. We welcome every opportunity to learn something from an experience no matter how tangential it may seem to our goal. As the Psalmist declares: "From G-d a man's steps are established." If we get "lost" on a trip and veer off the beaten path, it is for a reason. There must be some challenge there for us to meet, even if it appears to keep us away from our destination.

A Jew is a paradox. He or she is a product of both heaven and earth; obsessed with the

desire to serve G-d with love and with awe. As Jews, we are expected to focus on our goal of bringing about the ultimate Redemption, even as we try to see the meaning in everything we experience along the way.

However, being involved in many diverse areas of endeavor can cause us to lose the focus on our goal. To prevent that, the Torah has given us the story of Noach's singular life. His example helps us focus on, and conclude, our journey towards the ultimate Redemption.

To be more precise, the Rebbe told us that we have already reached our destination and entered the Messianic Age. Our objective now is to open our eyes wide enough to see the new reality that exists and to internalize the Messianic ideal and way of life. In the Rebbe's words, our task today is to "greet or internalize Moshiach."

Since we have reached our destination, the time has come to shift over to following the first, single-minded, approach. We now must bring all of our attention to bear on internalizing all that the *Geulah*-Redemption represents.

Noach's Singular Life

This, we may suggest, is the eternal lesson we learn from Noach and which, therefore, justifies our spending time with him. The Noach approach is one of singularity. Noach's life was dedicated to one, and only one, goal to save the world from extinction. Convincing other people to repent would have been an admirable thing for him, but in his world view that would have been a side-show and tangential to his mission of building the ark, gathering all of the species of animals and sheltering them so they could survive and start life anew in the aftermath of the devastating flood.

Changing the hearts of multitudes would have been a great accomplishment; but that was not Noach's primary mission and he was not capable of doing both.

Noach's Aberration

It is fascinating that after Noach leaves the Ark he plants a vineyard and finds oblivion in

his wine. That is the moment when he is disgraced by his son *Cham* and grandson *Cana'an*.

Rashi comments that Noach profaned himself by planting a vineyard before planting other things.

Rashi seems to suggest that Noach's mistake was in his priorities. If Noach's claim to fame was his tenacious focus on the goal, he was faulted when he got sidetracked by desire to celebrate his salvation with wine. While that may have been motivated by a desire to thank G-d, it would still have been a deviation from his singular goal of rebuilding a world.

The fact that Noach offered sacrifices along the way was not considered a deviation because G-d intimated to him that he should bring those offerings as a way of securing the world in the future. Indeed, when G-d told him to bring seven of the kosher animals (as opposed to two of the non-kosher ones) Noach understood that it was to bring offerings after the Flood. The offerings were not to be a gesture of gratitude, but rather part of G-d's formula for never bringing

another flood and thereby securing the future of the world. That was Noach's true mandate, as opposed to planting a vineyard, even if it was for the purpose of celebrating his salvation and praising G-d.

This explains why the Torah sums up the life of Noach with the single expression, "his days **was**," because all of his days were dedicated to this single overarching role of saving the world.

Two Singular Goals

The question that arises from this analysis is that with regard to Abraham and Isaac the Torah uses the plural form, whereas with respect to Jacob it also uses the singular.

The answer to this question lies in the different roles of Abraham and Isaac as compared to Jacob. Abraham and Isaac were not just the progenitors of the Jewish people. They were also the ancestors of many other nations. They therefore had a diversified role. Abraham's relationship with Yishmael was different from his relationship with Isaac. Likewise, Isaac related differently to Jacob and

Esav. To the former he gave all of his most powerful physical and spiritual blessings and to the latter he bequeathed physical power.

Jacob, by contrast, was exclusively the father of the Jewish people. He represents the singularity and immortality of Jewish existence. The Talmud states the Jacob never died. One way of understanding that statement is that Jacob is embodied in the entire Jewish people. Indeed, the Kabbalists say that all of the souls of all Jews for eternity were consolidated in the soul of Jacob. Just as the Jewish people are an eternal people so was Jacob. Jacob's life and legacy is the continued existence of the Jewish people until the coming of Moshiach.

Whereas Noach's singularity was designed to keep the world going, Jacob's was designed for Jewish continuity, which leads the world inexorably to its intended goal-the coming of Moshiach.

We can now appreciate why we must live with Noach for an entire week. His example provides us with the power to maintain a single minded obsession with our goal. Before we learn about the multifarious avenues that

we inherited from our Patriarchs and the twelve sons of Jacob, we must instill within ourselves the singular Noach-consciousness that will enable us to focus on the goal of Moshiach and Redemption.

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

NOACH AND MENACHEM: EASING AND COMFORTING

**All forms of life exist within the human
being.**

**What we do with and to ourselves affects
these elements.**

**When our own moral lives are improved it
removes the curses that exist within nature.**

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

NOACH AND MENACHEM: EASING AND COMFORTING

Even the Earth was Unfaithful!

When the Torah describes the impending flood that will destroy the world, it describes the problem as follows:

G-d said to Noach, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery through them; and behold, I am going to destroy them from the earth."

Rashi supplies an alternate translation for the last words of this verse and renders it thus:

"I am going to destroy them **with** the earth."

Rashi then adds:

Three handbreadths of earth, of the depth of the plow, were dissolved and washed away.

Why did G-d have to destroy part of the earth? What did the earth ever do to deserve such a fate?

The Midrash, the source of Rashi's comment, provides an enigmatic answer: Even the earth was corrupted and "unfaithful." When its inhabitants planted wheat it would produce "*zunin*" [some translate this as darnel, a grain that is poisonous for humans but fit for some birds.] Thus, G-d punished the earth for its unfaithfulness.

Commentators ask how is it possible to punish the earth. The earth is inanimate, incapable of possessing an evil inclination. How can G-d punish something that has no free choice?

A second question has been raised: Why did G-d remove three handbreadths of earth, not more and not less?

The Micro and Macro

To answer these questions it is necessary to reflect on the definition of a human being. Our Sages tell us that a human being is a composite of all other aspects of creation. This is the meaning of the Midrashic statement that "A person is a miniature universe." Whatever exists in the larger world exists in some form in the human being as well.

Now, although the human being is comprised of every aspect of creation, in more general terms it can be said that human beings are a composite of three major levels of existence: earth (inanimate or inorganic matter), vegetation and animals. The body itself is inanimate. The growth of the body is comparable to vegetation and the mobility of the human being signals the animal within us. However, the human being transcends all of these features because the human being has the capacity to speak as well.

On a deeper level, the three components of a human being can be divided in the following manner:

The physical body is the inanimate aspect of our being. Our emotions are like vegetation

which grow and mature with the passage of time. Our ability to think and reason is the animal in us because the animal also has an intellect that it uses for its survival.

The human aspect of our being is our ability to rise above our nature and to recognize that there is a Divine Being above us to Whom we must pay homage.

When a human being becomes corrupted he or she degrades the human layer of his or her personality. It also denigrates one's entire gestalt; the animal, plant and inanimate layers of one's personality.

The World is in Our Heart

Moreover, King Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes (3:11):

“He also put the world in their hearts.”

This has been interpreted to mean that the entire world depends on what happens in our hearts. We have the power to affect the world outside of us with the world that is inside of us.

If we corrupt the animal within us it affects all of the animals in the world. Similarly, when we defile the vegetation within us it adversely affects all vegetation; the same is true for the inanimate part of the human being.

We can now understand how the earth could be corrupted and therefore “punished.” It is not a suggestion that the earth itself has the understanding necessary for it to become corrupt and deserve to be punished. Rather, it means that the physical earth is a projection of the internal earth within humanity. When humanity has corrupted every aspect of its being, from the human down to the inanimate, it has corrupted everything else, from the people, animals, plants and even the earth.

Three Handbreadths; Three Potentials

We can now begin to understand the significance of the three handbreadths of earth that was wiped away. The significance of the number three in this regard is that it parallels the three elements that the earth also possesses.

The earth is the source of vegetation, which directly and indirectly feeds all animals and humans. When the world functions in accordance with G-d's will and the people are not debased, the earth element within humanity is elevated to the realm of vegetation, and from there to the animal kingdom, and finally into human realm. The human being then elevates himself or herself to the level of the Divine. At this point not only is the human element elevated; his entire structure of inanimate, vegetable and animal are also incorporated within the Divine.

It can thus be said that the earth within man has the potential to be elevated and incorporated into three higher gradations: the vegetative, animal and human. When that potential is not realized and particularly when it is corrupted in the extreme it can be said that all three potential aspects of the earth have been destroyed.

What happens within the micro world of the human being is then reflected in the macro world. The earth is elevated into the Divine through the intervening states of vegetation, animal and human. However, when the people corrupted and degraded themselves,

they caused the degradation of their internal three levels. This corruption then causes the degeneration of the external hierarchy of levels. Thus, even the physical earth, with its own three levels of potential, was debased and ultimately destroyed.

The reason the Midrash and Rashi connect this to the earth's sprouting of the darnel plant instead of wheat, was to illustrate the inanimate earth, unable to produce suitable vegetation. The earth had no room to grow and rise upwards along the food chain; it was thus destined to be wiped away. When a creation loses its ability to be elevated it loses its *raison d'être*.

The Depth of the Plow

However we must still understand why the three handbreadths mentioned by the Midrash and Rashi is described as "the depth of the plow?"

Perhaps it is a hint to the words of our Sages in the Midrash, cited by Rashi, that the reason Noach was called Noach, which is related to the word for "easing," is that Noach

eased the plight of humanity by inventing the plow. Before Noah people plowed the earth with their bare hands. By inventing the plow Noah brought relief to the world and ameliorated G-d's curse of Adam, "Accursed shall be the earth because of you, through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life... By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread..." As Rashi explains, before Noah, the earth was cursed to produce thorns and thistles instead of wheat.

This explains why the Midrash and Rashi refer to the earth's producing darnel instead of wheat as a form of unfaithfulness. It was a reversal of the gains so recently attained by Noah. Noah, by inventing the plow, was able to remove the curse of the earth not producing suitable vegetation, but by the corrupt actions of the people, the earth reverted to its cursed state.

The removal of the curse was directly connected to Noah's righteousness. To the extent that he elevated the earth within himself, he also elevated the physical earth, making it more receptive to the production of vegetation. Later when the world degenerated, the salutary effects of the plow

were removed; the degeneration undid what Noach had accomplished.

Noach and Menachem - the Ultimate Plowman

The Torah connects the word Noach to the word *yenachameinu*. This word, Rashi states, means “he will bring us ease.” Rashi then cites an alternate translation as “he will comfort us.” However, Rashi says that if that was the correct meaning for Noach, he should have been called Menachem, which means “comforter.”

On a deeper level, Rashi seems to suggest that what Noach began remained incomplete and thus he could not be called Menachem-Comforter. That name was reserved for Moshiach, as the Talmud (Sanhedrim 98b) says, Menachem is the name of Moshiach.

Rashi links these two individuals to each other. There is something these two men have in common, but they are at two ends of the historical expanse. Noach was the first to refine the world and bring some rest and ease, but he was not successful in removing

the curse of Adam entirely. That was the reason for the world's relapse and its failure to benefit over the long term from his plow, both physically and spiritually.

Moshiach who lives at the end of our period of exile will finally bring Noach's pioneering work to fruition and bring total comfort to the entire world.

The relationship Noach has with Moshiach is actually hinted in the word for plow itself, *machreisha*, which contains the word HaMoshiach, the Moshiach. In addition, the Midrash relates that as the Temple was destroyed, a farmer heard his cow moo while he was plowing a field. A certain "clairvoyant" Arab passed by and told him that he could tell from the cow's sound that the Jewish Temple had just been destroyed. When the cow mooed again, the same Arab said the Moshiach of the Jewish people was born, and his name is Menachem.

However we are to understand that enigmatic passage (a subject of discussion for another essay or two) we can see the intersection between plowing and Moshiach, whose name is Menachem-the Comforter.

A verse in Amos (9:13) in its prediction of the future Messianic Era states: "Behold, the days come, said the L-rd, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper..." The Midrash comments that the "plowman" here refers to the Moshiach, the scion of David.

Moshiach is the one who will plow the earth. In spiritual terms this means he will uplift the entire world, including its lowliest levels, on both the macro and micro level. His efforts will truly bring complete comfort to the world. Instead of the not-quite-good-enough Noach, with his risk of relapsing, there will be the permanent version of Menachem-eternal comfort.