



דרכים בפרשה

נח



וישלח את הערב ויצא יצוא ושוב עד יבשת המים מעל הארץ ח:ז

He sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning until the waters dried from upon the earth (8:7)

It was practically a year after Noach and his family had entered into the *taiva*/ark. The *taiva* had already come to rest upon Mount Ararat, and the mountain tops were now visible. A look through the skylight allowed Noach to determine that it would be possible to exit the *taiva* and re-establish normal life on earth. But what about the air quality and vegetation? Was the world ready to once again be inhabited? Had the water descended enough? Even if the water was all gone, perhaps the ground was still completely saturated from the flood.

The possuk tells us that Noach sent out the *orev*/raven to check if the time was right to exit. Would the air be too moist for the raven to tolerate (Sforno)? A raven feeds on carrion of man and beast. Would it bring some back, thus proving that the water level was low enough for the raven to find something on the ground (Radak)? The raven went to and fro but never actually did its job. Subsequently, the *yona*/dove was sent out and did indeed complete its task, returning with an olive leaf that it had plucked with its bill. The meforshim

point out that prior to the *mabul*, even the land was completely corrupted and all of the plants mixed with other species. The olive tree is the only tree that does not take to grafting with other types of trees, so it was specifically an olive leaf that was brought back because it remained pure.

Finally, on 27 Marcheshvan of the following year, Noach was able to leave the *taiva*. Rashi points out that the rain began to fall on 17 Marcheshvan of the previous year, thus making it one complete solar year; three hundred and sixty five days that the earth was uninhabitable.

Chazal (Eirubin 22) tell us that the middos of the raven are not exactly exemplary. (אכזרי על בניו ועל בני ביתו) - *cruel to his sons and other members of his household like a raven*) The raven is known as *achzori*/cruel.

The question presents itself: why didn't Noach just send out the dove right away? Rav Tzvi Hirsh Berlin z"l explains that the nature of the dove is *temimus*. (The Chafetz Chaim defines *temimus* as "one

who speaks and conducts his business without any sort of deception, and always ensures that his words express his true inner feelings”).) At times, *temimus* can also be looked as naiveté. The *mabul* came about as the result of wickedness. If he would have sent out the dove, quite possibly the dove would have been fooled into thinking that all was okay and the wickedness was no longer present. However, the raven would surely recognize its own type, and would not be fooled.

Chazal tell us that raven would actually complete a different most important mission. Later on in the times of Eliyahu Hanavi, during the two years of famine that Eliyahu had foretold, the raven would supply the food for him. The Tosfos HaRosh writes that this is hinted to in our possuk, as it says עד יבשת המים. The letters of יבשת - *yeboshes* rearranged spell תשבי - a reference to Eliyahu Hatishbi. Accordingly, Chazal are explaining that the raven did not take this task because it was awaiting another task.

The Maharal wonders why the raven was prepared to do the second task but not the first. [*Before explaining his answer, I believe that the question itself is a great limmud/lesson. The nature of a person is to look at what is next on line, but hardly*

ever to focus on the present. At times we have such brocha in front of us, but don't stop for even a moment to realize and enjoy it.]

The Maharal explains that Noach understood that as an “*achzar*”, the raven was all too happy to help Eliyahu Hanavi. At that moment, Eliyahu held the key to the rains, and he was withholding the rains from the world. Of course the raven would have wanted to be an accomplice, for this would mean withholding rains from the rest of the world. But Noach came to him and said “I would like to give you a different mission. Go out and help the world. Check the viability of the land. Change your middos by helping people out.” This however, the raven was not prepared to do!

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפאל

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