



### REACHING THE UNREACHABLE

#### Text:

"Noah was a perfectly righteous man ... Noah walked with G-d"

[Bereishis 6:9]

"And Noah found favor in the eyes of G-d."

[Bereishis 6:8]

"And Noah found favor" – to save even his sons and daughters... Not because he was worthy of it; G-d granted this to him as a favor... **For although Noah rebuked [his contemporaries] for their behaviors which were destructive to society, he did not teach them to know G-d and to follow in His ways [and thus he failed to save them]**...But a righteous man who perfects others as well has the merit to save others too, for there is hope thereby that he can bring them to repentance...

[Commentary of S'forno]

#### Question:

Noah rebuked his contemporaries for destroying society – and his words fell on deaf ears, How, then, could Noah possibly have taught them "to know G-d and follow in His ways"?!

#### Answer:

People can be reached in different ways. When exposing their degenerate behavior failed, Noah *could* have tried another tactic – portraying the beauty of spiritual ideals and noble character traits.

#### Message:

An individual may appear too coarse for lofty concepts, too corrupt to appreciate refined ideals. Not so, the Torah tells us. A human being possesses an indestructible spiritual core, that can be suppressed and buried but never extinguished. We never know what will reach someone – and we must never fail to try.

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In the generations following Adam, the world descends into immorality and evil. "The world was corrupted... and the world became filled with robbery." Only one man, Noah (Noach), remains purely righteous.

G-d informs Noah that all life will be washed away in a devastating Flood. He instructs Noah to build a three-story wooden Ark, which will house Noah, his family and one male and one female of every kind of animal and bird. Of kosher animals Noah is told to take seven each.

Noah builds the Ark in full view of his neighbors, who remain unmoved by his warnings of impending destruction. At last the Flood begins: forty days of ceaseless rain wash away all of mankind, rising higher than the tallest mountaintops. It will be a full year before life on Earth begins anew.

To see whether the floodwaters have receded, Noah sends out a raven. But the raven merely circles the Ark, refusing to fulfill his mission. Noah then sends a dove, who flies away but soon returns, unable to find a spot to rest. A week later Noah tries again; the dove returns with an olive leaf in its beak, indicating that vegetation has begun to reappear. A week later the dove leaves for a third time, and does not return. Noah realizes that the land has finally dried.

Noah leaves the Ark and brings offerings to G-d, Who in turn promises that humanity will never again be subjected to total destruction. The rainbow is designated as a symbol of this Covenant between G-d and Man.

Noah's three sons, Shem, Cham and Yefes, repopulate the world. All of humanity is united by language, culture and geography. This formidable civilization, based in Mesopotamia, embarks on a project to construct a tower reaching Heaven. G-d, however, stymies their plan, causing human speech to diverge into different languages, resulting in the fragmentation of society and the dispersal of mankind all over the globe.

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