

Perashat Noah

A MESSAGE FROM A DOVE

At the end of forty days of rain Noah sent a raven and afterward a dove to verify whether the floodwater had subsided. The dove returned to Noah with an olive tree branch in its beak. The Talmud (Eiruvin 18b) explains that the dove here relayed to Noah the following message: *“I would prefer my food and sustenance bitter as an olive from the hands of G-d, than food as sweet as honey from the hands of a human being.”* The dove’s words were powerful, maybe even slighting to Noah who restlessly toiled for forty days to sustain this dove amongst all the animals of the world. The following concept may clarify this.

The symbolic “dove with a twig in its beak” became an international representation of peace. R’ S. R. Hirsh claims however that the dove does not represent peace as much as it represents independence. The dove conveyed to Noah that independence offers greater pleasure than comfort. Although the dove received *first class service* this did not paramount the pleasure of freedom and dealing with the world as is, without assistance. We may not be cognizant of it but G-d implemented in all creatures an innate pleasure in life to survive on their own without human intervention for support. This pleasure is linked to the world’s greatest pleasure, *recognition of G-d and appreciation to Him for success.* This pleasure is greater and deeper than being supported comfortably. Being supported can easily confuse one into believing that the means of support are the source and not mere mediums.

Hence, the dove told Noah the following. *I have enjoyed all that you have done for me and I am grateful. Despite this, I would like to move on and have a direct relationship with my Creator.* This reminds us of the prayer we make in *Birkat Hamazon*, the grace after meals. *And please, Almighty, do not make us dependent upon the hands of humans for sustenance... rather dependent on Your hand, which is so wide, open, full and rich...*

Whether we are supported by others or on our own we must remember not to lose focus of who ultimately supports us. Displaying appreciation to G-d and strengthen our relationship with Him can bring about the ultimate inner satisfaction. All this can be handicapped by a false perspective that a parent, guardian, school administration, boss etc. are the root sources from whom we receive. The dove conveyed to us a message that it is easy to be confused about this. Although these kind forces of support toil endlessly to benefit their recipients, we must keep in mind that the real source of sustenance is from Above. This concept can aid those who are bitter about how much and as to how they are supported. A sincere *Birkat Hamazon* and a change of perspective may convert such a bitterness into something as sweet as honey.