

Parashat Noach

The portion of the Torah read this week describes the famous story of the flood.

We must understand:

1. Why did G-d had to save Noah by means of an ark?
2. Why [did He command Noah him to bring] seven each of the ritually pure animals and of the ritually impure only two each? and
3. Who exactly were the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion?

The end of the portion describes the events of the Tower of Babel, the aftermath of which was the dispersion of mankind.

[To answer these questions,] know that Adam, before he sinned, was not physical. His was clothed in light, and he encompassed all [the spiritual] worlds. His head was in *Atzilut*; his [torso, corresponding to the] middle triad [of *sefirot*, *chesed-gevurah-tiferet*] was in *Beriah*; his [lower extremities, corresponding to the] final triad [of *sefirot*, *netzach-hod-yesod*] was in *Yetzirah*; and the crown [of his sexual organ] was in *Asiyah*.

As we have explained previously, the *sefirot* in the world of *Tikun* are positioned as triads. The upper triad is *chochmah-binah-da'at*, the intellect, corresponding to the three lobes of the brain. The middle triad, *chesed-gevurah-tiferet*, corresponds to the right and left arms and torso, respectively. The lower triad, *netzach-hod-yesod*, corresponds to the right and left legs and sexual organ, respectively. The final *sefirah*, *malchut*, corresponds to the glans of the male sexual organ (or in other contexts, to the female).

All souls were included in his. When sinned, his stature was diminished and he became physical, and this caused a blemish in all the souls [he encompassed].

“His stature was diminished” obviously does not mean that he physically shrunk, and that being spiritual is just being giant. Rather, this simply the way the Kabbalists describe Adam’s transformation from a totally spiritual to partly physical being.

However, he [originally] encompassed souls of *Arich Anpin*, and when he sinned, these souls ascended on high.

As we have explained previously, the four worlds correspond to the four lower *partzufim*, while the higher *partzufim* correspond to the higher world, *Adam Kadmon*:

<i>partzuf</i>	<i>sefirah</i>	world	body
<i>Arich Anpin</i>	<i>keter</i>	<i>Adam Kadmon</i>	skull
<i>Abba</i>	<i>chochmah</i>	<i>Atzilut</i>	right lobe of brain
<i>Ima</i>	<i>binah</i>	<i>Beriah</i>	left lobe of brain
<i>Z'eir Anpin</i>	the <i>midot</i>	<i>Yetzirah</i>	arms, torso, legs, sexual organ
<i>Nukva d'Z'eir Anpin</i>	<i>malchut</i>	<i>Asiyah</i>	glans or female

In addition to encompassing souls whose level of consciousness reflected the four principle worlds as detailed above, Adam's soul also encompassed souls whose consciousness was higher than that of the world of *Atzilut* proper. These souls were evidently too sublime to be affected by the sin, and when Adam's being was diminished and therefore no longer spiritual enough to encompass them, they simply flew away from him.

The rest of the souls were eventually rectified, however, as we will [now] explain, please G-d.

These souls left [the diminished being of Adam] by way of seminal emissions, for [as we are taught, Adam] sired evil spirits. This happens when the drop of seminal emission impregnates a female demon. The soul [that has thus become entrapped in evil] must be reincarnated afterwards in order to be rectified.

We are taught in the Talmud¹ that during the 130 years Adam separated from Eve (after the sin until he fathered Seth), he suffered from seminal emissions. (The Hebrew term for "seminal emission," *keri*, applies both to intentional and involuntary seminal emissions. Although voluntary emission is considered a more serious sin than involuntary emission, the individual is considered responsible for involuntary emission as well, since dreams are in most cases the way the mind sorts out the thoughts the individual entertained during his waking hours.)

Any seminal emission implies a recipient of the vital seed. Normally, this is one's wife, who inspires or arouses her husband to transmit his creative flow to her; the result of this being holy spiritual offspring (in the form of increased holy energy in the world) and ideally, physical offspring as well. However, evil can also entice or trick a man to transmit his creative flow to it, by deceiving him into thinking that some holy purpose (or some cheap imitation of the exhilaration and excitement of holiness, i.e., ephemeral excitement or fulfillment) will come of this. In this case, the recipient of his vital seed is a "female demon," whether that be an actual human being, a mental fantasy, or in the most general, philosophical sense, any false ideal or substitute for holiness that man may fall prey to dedicating his energies to.

The result of this unholy union is that, temporarily, vital energy has been added to the side of unholiness, and unholy energy has been propagated. The mechanism G-d set up to rectify this is for this "soul" to transmigrate into an incarnation in which it feels the horror of unfulfillment, as we have explained previously.

Although the Midrash describes a situation that persisted for 130 years and the Arizal describes a process that occurred simultaneously with the sin, this is simply because spiritual processes that occur outside the context of time require time when manifested in the physical plane.

In addition, [Adam] blemished souls that were associated with his own, personal soul-root. These were [intended to be] rectified in the souls of Cain and Abel, Abel rectifying the aspect of *chochmah* and Cain the aspect of *binah*.

All [the souls that originate in the left side,] from *binah* downward, became "shells" [i.e., evil]. In contrast, even the *gevurah*-aspects of [the right side, that] which descends from *chochmah*, did not become "shells," although they did become their life-force.

¹ *Eiruvin* 18a, based on Genesis 5:3.

As we said previously, *binah* is the aspect of the intellect that exercises judgement and evaluates the insight of *chochmah*. Therefore, it is essentially a judgmental force, and as such can serve as the source for unholy judgement and vengeance.

Therefore, when Cain attempted to rectify [reality by offering his sacrifice] he made it worse instead.

Cain exercised the attribute of *binah* incorrectly, and misjudged how G-d would react to his offering. Adam ate the fruit prematurely (it would have been permitted to him on Shabbat), assuming incorrectly that G-d wanted him to “take the initiative” and forcefully bring about the perfection of the world on his own, before the appointed time. Cain, understanding this, felt that to rectify this miscalculation it was necessary to disavow the human side of the equation altogether and live life submersed in the experience of G-d’s absolute unity, leaving no room for self-awareness or initiative from man’s side. This was reflected in his offering, flax, which grows as a single seed on a stalk. Of course, since this perspective precludes man’s purpose on earth, to make the lower realms a home for G-d, it was rejected.

Abel also made things worse. This is the implication of the verse, “And Abel brought, he *also*...,”² meaning that he sinned as well.

The fact that Abel’s offering is compared to Cain’s implies that it, too, was defective in some way. Also, the fact that Abel was murdered means that he must have been deserving of death in some way (although this in no way exonerates Cain, of course). Elsewhere, the Arizal states that Abel’s sin was that he “gazed” at the Divine presence.

[The situation remained unrectified] until Moses came and rectified the *hei* of [Abel’s name in Hebrew,] *Hevel* and the *shin* of [Seth’s name in Hebrew,] *Shet*.

Moses in Hebrew is *Moshe*, *mem-shin-hei*. He is thus seen as the rectification of Seth and Abel. In other words, the ultimate tool for rectifying the sin of Adam is the Torah (which was given through Moses).

Some of the souls that went out [of Adam] were rectified [by being reincarnated] in converts.

When an individual converts to Judaism (in accordance with Jewish law), he draws down into his being a Jewish soul that he did not possess previously. Existentially, then, his conversion process represents the transformation of the mundane into the holy.

To explain further: The [original] garment of Adam was the light that corresponds to the [aspect of the soul known as] *nefesh*. This [light] was like the fourth “shell,” which is attached to holiness and is called *nogah* [“glow”], half of which is from holiness and half of which is from evil. When evil prevails [over it], it becomes wholly evil; when holiness [prevails], the opposite happens.

There are four levels of non-holiness: three levels of absolute evil and one level of neutrality. These are referred to in the vision of Ezekiel as “a stormy wind,” “a huge cloud,” “a flashing fire,” and “a glow.”³ The three levels of evil are envisioned as three “shells” surrounding the edible fruit, or holiness. In between the shells and the fruit is a fourth, softer “shell” or “peel” (e.g., the rind of an orange) that in some cases is edible. This signifies the level of neutrality, which can be subsumed into either evil or holiness, depending on how it is used. Into this category of reality fall all those things that are neither expressly forbidden nor are used for an explicit *mitzvah*.

There are five levels of the soul, signifying five levels of holiness. These stand in opposition to the four levels of non-holiness as follows:

² Genesis 4:4.

³ Ezekiel 1:4.

level of the soul	opposite level of non-holiness
<i>yechidah</i>	
<i>chayah</i>	third level of evil
<i>neshamah</i>	second level of evil
<i>ruach</i>	first level of evil
<i>nefesh</i>	neutrality (<i>nogah</i>)

There is no level of evil corresponding to the *yechidah*, since *yechidah* is the soul's total identification with Divinity, and there obviously can be no type of evil that expresses the same quality in the opposite direction, since there is no "evil deity" to compromise G-d's absolute oneness.

The soul of Onkelos, the convert, was from this aspect [of reality].

Onkelos was a Roman who converted to Judaism and is the author of the standard Aramaic translation of the Torah. We have discussed the significance of Aramaic in this context previously.

This is the mystical significance of [the custom of reading the Torah] "twice as in Scripture and once in translation."

The Talmud enjoins us to review the weekly portion of the Torah each week by reading it aloud, each verse twice in the original Hebrew followed by once in the translation of Onkelos.⁴ By reading the Hebrew together with the Aramaic, we are subsuming the mundane, *nogah*-shell into holiness.

The *nogah*-principle encloses the light of holiness after midnight.⁵

As we said, the realm of the "fruit" or kernel of holiness is envisioned as existing within the four shells. In this depiction, we may consider the *nogah*-shell as protecting the holiness from the evil shells. (This is true, of course, to the extent that the individual or society has endeavored to consecrate the *nogah*-shell by subsuming their mundane activities into the realm of holiness. Otherwise, the *nogah*-shell comes under the rule of evil and there is no protective layer separating evil from holiness.)

Since this protection is said here to be operative specifically after midnight, we are taught that marital relations are preferably conducted at this time of the night. Thus the couple are assured that their union will be unhampered by the attacks of evil thoughts or confusion.

The sin of Adam was that he caused this [protective] covering to be opened up, and at that opening the forces of evil benefited from the light of holiness.

Adam's sin "punctured" the *nogah*-shell, allowing the forces of evil to invade (like a worm enters a fruit) and "suck" from holiness.

This is the mystical significance of the statement of our sages that Enoch was a cobbler,⁶ meaning that he closed that which Adam opened up, and was able to cover the light of *Beriah*.

Enoch was the sixth generation from Adam,⁷ and was something of a saint or ascetic who renounced the evil ways of his rapidly degenerating society. In the Midrash it is stated that the phrase describing the end of his life on earth—"and he was no more, for G-d took him," instead of the more usual "and he died,"—implies that G-d made

⁴ *Berachot* 8b.

⁵ It could be that the proper translation of *chatzot* here is *midday*, and refers to the fact that some consider it preferable to read the Torah portion after midday on Friday, but the context of the rest of the passage seems to indicate that "midnight" is intended.

⁶ *Midrash Talpiot*, s.v. *Chanoch*.

⁷ Genesis 5.

him into an angel (specifically, the angel Metatron⁸). Metatron occupies a pivotal position in the hierarchy of angels, and serves, among other things, to protect the realms of holiness from the forces of evil.

The word for “shoe” in Hebrew (*na'al* or *min'al*) is derived from the root meaning “to close” or “to lock.” The foot is the interface between man and the earth, or allegorically between holiness and mundane non-holiness. In order that man not be injured by the stones and thorns on the earth, he wears a shoe to protect his foot. Thus, Enoch, both in his earthly life and in his celestial life as Metatron, is involved in rectifying Adam’s sin by protecting man from the injuries and dangers of evil.

He was able to protect the light of the world of *Beriah* from exposure to evil, but not any lower level.

But about the world of *Yetzirah* it says: “And Abimelech looked in through the window.”⁹

When he was staying in the land of the Philistines, Isaac told the ruler, Abimelech, that Rebecca was his sister, for he feared that if he told him the truth, that Rebecca was his wife, Abimelech would kill him in order to take her. But, we are told, Abimelech looked in to their tent through the window and saw them engaging in marital intercourse, and thus discovered that they were husband and wife.

Abimelech signifies the evil of the Philistines; the fact that he was able to observe the union between Isaac and Rebecca means that their level of intercourse was in some way exposed or vulnerable to intrusion by evil.

Isaac engaged in marital relations on the level of *Asiyah*, where there is not intended to be any such intercourse, for that is the level of lesbianism. This is why the snake envied them, for he is on the level of *Asiyah*.

Isaac here was evidently engaging in marital relations in a relatively exclusively physical way, after the manner of the Philistines, known for their excessive sensual indulgence. (This is why the king of the Philistines was able to intrude on their union; he was there anyway, so to speak.) Obviously, marital relations are intended to be a sublime intertwining of the physical and spiritual aspects of the couple’s union, not a mere exercise in physical gratification. When there is no sublime, spiritual union between male and female, with all this implies in terms of the union of the male and female principles in creation (as we have described previously), the sexual act is reduced to the pursuit of raw sensual pleasure. In this way, it is like homosexuality, where the sensual pleasure is paramount and considered the justification for the intercourse and the indication of its “rightness.” The spiritual union between the partners—if there is any—is subordinate to the physical, instead of the reverse situation in proper marital relations.

Once intercourse occurs on this level, the snake, like Abimelech (who was simply playing the role of the snake further along in history) can rightfully argue that he is as fit a consort for Eve as Adam.

Now, Adam is considered to have committed [in the sin of the tree of knowledge] three cardinal sins: idolatry, sexual aberration, and murder.¹⁰

Murder: referring to the souls that left him as seminal emissions.

The sages compare intentional seminal emission to murder, since the individual is squandering his potential to bring life into the world.

Idolatry: for he caused the sparks of holiness to cling to the forces of evil.

Giving power to the forces of evil is serving them, which is idolatry.

Those souls who left him as seminal emissions returned as the generation of the flood, and made things even worse.

⁸ It is customary not to pronounce the names of angels that are not also names used for people (e.g., Michael, Gabriel, etc.).

⁹ Genesis 27:8.

¹⁰ *Zohar* 1:27b.

G-d sought to wipe out the generation of the flood “for all flesh had corrupted its way on earth,” meaning that they engaged in all kinds of sexual aberrations.

Therefore the floodwaters were required, in order to wipe out all those [corrupted] bodies. The earth, also, was washed away to a depth of three handbreadths. This refers to the *sefirah* of *malchut*, which is called “the earth.” The three “handbreadths” of *malchut* in which intercourse is not to take place were “wiped out.”

Malchut, the lowest *sefirah*, is manifest as the ground or earth, while *Z'eir Anpin* is manifest as the “heavens.” Just as the heavens rain on the earth, enabling it to grow fruit, *Z'eir Anpin* (the male) fertilizes *Nukva* (*malchut*, the female).

The three “handbreadths” are presumably the lowest three sub-*sefirot* of *malchut*, corresponding to *Asiyah* of *malchut*; as was stated above, intercourse is not supposed to take place only on the level of mere *Asiyah*. These three handbreadths therefore had to be reconstituted after the flood.

Noah was [a manifestation of the *sefirah* of] *yesod*, and [his three sons,] Shem, Ham, and Japheth corresponded to *chochmah*, *binah*, and *da'at* respectively. They issued by way of *yesod* and were thus rectified because they originated in a high level; the light therefore had to be concealed.

Noah was said to be “a righteous man, perfect in his generation...”¹¹ The appellation “righteous” (*tzadik*) is associated specifically with the *sefirah* of *yesod* and indicates sexual purity. In contrast to the rest of his depraved and degenerate generation, Noah was holy and guarded his sexuality properly. He was therefore able to elicit proper, rectified consciousness (*chochmah-binah-da'at*, or intellect), as opposed to Adam and his sons, each of whom erred in some way regarding proper G-d-consciousness.

As we said above, holiness has to be guarded and protected from the attacks of evil; therefore, until the world was purified, Noah and his sons had to be concealed inside the ark.

—translated from *Likutei Torah*

¹¹ Genesis 6:9.

Parashat Noach [second installment]

Toward the end of *parashat Noach*, the Torah relates the story of the Tower of Babel.¹ According to the oral Torah, the king who masterminded and led this revolt against G-d was Nimrod, who was mentioned in the preceding chapter.²

Know that the incident of the tower and Nimrod transmigrated into [the person and career of] Nebuchadnezzar. This is why he erected the statue in the Dura valley.

“King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and erected it in the plain of Dura in the country of Babylonia.”³ A cubit is about a foot and a half, so this statue was around 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. Nebuchadnezzar was thus a reincarnation of the Nimrod, and the statue was a “reincarnation” of the Tower of Babel.

Just as in the time of Nimrod, everyone spoke the same language and he ruled the whole world, Nebuchadnezzar also ruled the whole world. Thus, it is written, “I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High,”⁴ [the numerical value of the word for “clouds”] alluding to the seventy-two nations.

The verse quoted was spoken by (or reflects the sentiments of) Nebuchadnezzar. The numerical value of the word for “cloud” (*av, ayin-beit* = 70 + 2) is 72. Normally, the Torah speaks of seventy nations; it is not clear what the additional 2 refers to.

[Nebuchadnezzar] wanted the Jewish people to bow down to [this statue] along with [everyone else],⁵ and indeed, had Chananiah, Misha’el, and Azariah (G-d forbid) bowed down to it, Israel would not have been able to arise [out of its exile].

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamt that he saw a statue whose head was gold, whose chest and arms were silver, whose stomach and thighs were copper, whose legs were iron, and whose feet were iron and clay. Daniel told him that the components of this statue were the kingdom of Babylonia (the gold head) and the empires that would succeed it in ruling over the Jews. By making a similar statue entirely of gold, Nebuchadnezzar sought to subvert the prophecy and perpetuate the kingdom of Babylonia.

Chananiah, Misha’el, and Azariah (whose Babylonian names were Shadrach, Meisach, and Abednego) were Daniel’s Jewish companions, who refused to bow down to this statue. Nebuchadnezzar punished them by having them thrown into a fiery furnace, but they emerged unscathed.

He also intended to build a tower and a city, as it is written, “Is this not the great [city of] Babylon that I built up [into a royal house with my powerful strength, to glorify my splendor]!?”⁶

¹ Genesis 11:1-9.

² *ibid.* 10:8 ff.

³ Daniel 3:1.

⁴ Isaiah 14:14.

⁵ Daniel 3:3-30.

⁶ *ibid.* 4:27.

The people who built the Tower of Babel had said, “Let us build ourselves *a city and a tower* whose top reaches the heavens, and we will [thereby] achieve glory.”⁷

He built the statue in place of the tower. He wanted to receive the Divine beneficence via the seventy [celestial] princes, hoping that perhaps in this way Israel would be unable to arise [from its exile] and G-d’s beneficence would be directed toward the forces of evil.

G-d set up the workings of the world such that ideally, His beneficence flows primarily and directly to the forces of holiness and goodness, in order that they have what they need to carry out His purpose. Only a residual flow of beneficence reaches the forces of evil—enough to keep them in existence so that they can fulfill their role in the scheme of things. Evil also does not receive its life-force directly from G-d; rather, each nation receives its Divine flow via its celestial, spiritual archetypal angel (or “prince”). This is why non-Jews are allowed to believe in a certain degree of idolatry, i.e., that G-d shares or distributes His power to other celestial beings.

However, when those who should be acting righteously sin, they forfeit their preeminence and increase the power of evil, allowing it to receive the Divine flow first. The forces of good then have to receive their beneficence via the forces of evil. This is the condition of exile.

He was the *keter* of evil. This is why he was known as the king of Sheshach,⁸ for the numerical value of Sheshach is the same as that of *keter*.

Sheshach in *at-bash* is *Bavel*, Babylonia.

Sheshach: *shin-shin-kaf* = 300 + 300 + 20 = 620.

Keter: *kaf- taf-reish* = 20 + 400 + 200 = 620.

G-d, in His mercy, confounded his plan and ruined his intentions, and the statue fell on its face, for it was overcome by Chananiah, Misha’el, and Azariah.

They were saved from the fiery furnace just as our father Abraham had been saved. Similarly, G-d humbled Nimrod before our father Abraham, and he was saved from the fiery furnace.

When Abraham became known as a crusader against idolatry, Nimrod had him thrown in a fiery furnace, but Abraham emerged unscathed.

When Nimrod saw that his scheme [to get rid of Abraham] failed, he gathered four kings and waged war against five kings, all in order to snatch the Divine beneficence from our father Abraham.

After the incident with Nimrod and the fiery furnace, Abraham and his family left Babylonia to eventually settle in the land of Israel. The Torah then relates how king Amrafel of Shinar (another name for Babylonia) joined forces with three other neighboring kings and waged war against five kings of city-states in the land of Israel. When they conquered them, Abraham went to rescue his nephew Lot (who had been taken captive) and defeated this confederacy of four kings.⁹ The oral tradition identifies Amrafel with Nimrod.¹⁰



⁷ Genesis 11:4.

⁸ Jeremiah 25:26, 51:41.

⁹ Genesis 14.

¹⁰ see Rashi on Genesis 14:1.

When Nimrod and his people built the Tower of Babel, G-d said, “Behold, they are one people with one language, and this is what they have begun to do. Now, shall nothing be denied them of all they scheme to do?”¹¹

How could G-d say, “shall nothing be denied them?” Even though man does possess free choice, would it be so difficult for G-d to prevent them from fulfilling their evil schemes?

Why, then, does G-d apparently have to do something to ensure that mankind will not be able to do all it wants?

What they were after, rather, was the following. They knew the [mystical] Names of G-d, and employed them for practical use. They were familiar with all the various angels and their positions in the celestial hierarchy, and were able to [control a specific angel by using a Divine Name to] adjure the angel that controlled it.

This is what is meant by the technique of adjuration via the use of holy Names. We know how to use them to adjure a lower angel in the name of the higher angel that influences and controls it. If [the lower angel] attempts to do other than what we have adjured it to do, it will not work at all. [The generation of the dispersion] knew all this.

Thus, it is written, “Then it was begun to call in the Name of G-d.”¹² For in the times of Enosh, they knew how to manipulate G-d’s Names. The explanation given to this verse by the Targum [of Onkelos], that [in this era] mankind began to serve idols [accords with this explanation]. For it means that with the knowledge that they used to manipulate the Divine Names they caused Divine beneficence to descend to idols. Thus, both explanations mean the same thing.

Now, this technique would not have worked had they not known how to combine the letters and Names in Hebrew, for it is impossible to manipulate these Names in any other language. Thus, it is written, “The whole earth was of one language and united words.” The numerical value of the words for “one language” [*safah achat*, plus the *kolel*] is the same as that of the words “the holy tongue” [*lashon hakodesh*].

Safah achat: sin-pei-hei alef-chet-tav = 300 + 80 + 5 + 1 + 8 + 400 = 794.

Lashon hakodesh: lamed-shin-vav-nun hei-kuf-dalet-shin = 30 + 300 + 6 + 50 + 5 + 100 + 4 + 300 = 795.

“United words” refers to the use of G-d’s Names, for they express His oneness, and [their use involves combining and] unifying them.

The phrase, “And they said, come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower” refers to the idol they wanted to make.

¹¹ Genesis 11:6.

¹² *Ibid.* 4:26.

The phrase, “whose top reaches heaven” refers to the fact that they wanted to give this idol the ability to channel the Divine beneficence to them by manipulating G-d’s Names, as above. For they knew that this idol would be powerless unless it could receive power from holiness.

Their intention was that it would force Divine beneficence to be channeled to them, via their use of these Names, even though they would not behave properly [and earn the Divine blessing]. They wanted to behave as bad as they wished and not submit to the rule of holiness. After all, it takes great effort to deny oneself the material lusts, and they wanted to enjoy the pleasures of this world [unhindered] and have the idol channel goodness to them by force of the Divine Names, as we said.

The one who masterminded all this was Nimrod, for he was the leader of the generation of the dispersion. He was extremely adept at this technique of manipulating [Divine Names].

The same was Nebuchadnezzar’s intention, for he was a reincarnation of the wicked Nimrod. Therefore, the letters that make up their names are similar, [as we will show].

Nebuchadnezzar: nun-beit-vav-chaf-dalet-nun-tzadik-reish.

Nimrod: nun-mem-reish-vav-dalet.

The [five] letters that spell *Nimrod* can be aligned with the [first five] letters that spell *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the last three letters [of *Nebuchadnezzar*] spell the word for “ruler” [*netzer*].

Netzer: nun-tzadik-reish.

The beginning and last letters of *Nimrod* and *Nebuchad* are the same: *nun* and *dalet*.

Thus, *Nebuchadnezzar* can be interpreted as meaning “king Nebuchad,” *Nebuchad* alluding to *Nimrod*.

The idol-statue that Nebuchadnezzar made was intended to fulfill the same function as the city and idol-tower that Nimrod built.

Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar also built his statue with the power of Divine Names, for he took the headband [*tzitiz*] of the High priest, on which was engraved G-d’s Name *Havayah*, and placed it on the mouth of the idol.

The priestly garments, including the High priest’s headband, had been captured by Nebuchadnezzar with the fall of Jerusalem and taken to Babylonia.

Thus, the statue spoke and said, “I am G-d, your G-d.” It was actually speaking the truth, for the Divine Name [on the headband] was speaking, but the people were tricked into thinking that the statue was saying this.

Daniel climbed up to the statue's head with ladders they brought him, because he said he wanted to kiss the statue. When he kissed it, he removed [the headband] from its mouth, and it immediately toppled. It could not stand naturally for it was sixty cubits tall and only six cubits wide; it was only because of the Divine power of the Name *Havayah* [engraved on the headband] that it was able to stand.

About this it is written, "I will punish Bel in Babylonia, and I will remove from his mouth what he has swallowed."¹³ Bel was the idol of Babylonia. What was "swallowed" in his mouth was the Name *Havayah*.

[...]

This is the meaning of "Behold, they are one people with the same language," meaning that if they did not know Hebrew, they would not be able to manipulate G-d's Names. But "this they have begun to do," meaning that the sole reason they were able to begin this was because they spoke Hebrew. Therefore, "they will not be withheld," for by using the Divine Names and their power to adjure [angels], they would be able to do whatever they wanted.

The parable for this is that once there was a king who gave the keys to his storerooms to a number of people, who then could enter his storehouses whenever they wanted. In order to prevent this, the king changed the locks, and these people could no longer open them.

G-d did the same here. He changed His Names, as it is written, "Come, let us descend and confound their speech." Furthermore, he confounded their language, so they could no longer speak the Holy language, and even if they would try to adjure the angels in other languages, this would be totally ineffective. He therefore made them forget Hebrew, and thus they no longer knew how to do anything [like this].

—translated from *Sefer HaLikutim* and *Likutei Torah*

¹³ Jeremiah 51:44.

Parashat Noach [third installment]

“The water prevailed fifteen cubits above, and the mountains were covered.”¹ Thus, during the flood, the highest mountaintop was submerged 15 cubits.

Let us understand why [the mountaintops were submerged] fifteen cubits, no more and no less. Furthermore, once [the Torah] says that [“the water prevailed fifteen cubits] above,” why must it say that “the mountains were covered”? This is implied in the word “above”!

It is enough to say simply that the water prevailed fifteen cubits above the mountains. What is gained by saying that they were covered?

The answer: The sin of the generation of the flood was wasteful emission of seed. It is known that this act causes above [the same thing, namely,] that the drop [of Divine beneficence] issues from the male [i.e., *Z'eir Anpin*] without being posited in the female [i.e., *Nukva*]. Rather, it is captured by the forces of evil.

This is the mystical meaning of the verse, “And G-d saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.”²

The verb “to corrupt” (*hashcheit*) also means “to waste.” Thus, the phrase “for all flesh had corrupted...” can also mean, “for all flesh had wasted its way on the earth.” This immediately evokes the story of Judah’s son Onan, where we are told that “when he engaged in marital relations with his [dead] brother’s wife, he wasted it on the earth, in order not to give seed to his brother.”³ The verse describing the state of the earth before the flood thus indicates that wasting seed was rampant.

“The earth” refers to the supernal “earth,” [which was destroyed.] And in what did its destruction consist? “That *all* flesh had destroyed...” i.e., that the supernal *yesod*, which is termed “all,” had “destroyed its way *on* the earth,” and not *in Nukva*.

“Earth” is an appellation for *Nukva/malchut*, which receives the seed of *Z'eir Anpin* and develops into fruition and expression.

In the verse, “To You, O G-d, is the greatness [*gedulah*, a synonym for *chesed*], and the might [*gevurah*], and the beauty [*tiferet*], and the victory [*netzach*], and the majesty [*hod*], for all [referring to *yesod*] that is in heaven and earth, to You, O G-d, is the dominion [*mamlachah*, a synonym for *malchut*],”⁴ *yesod* is referred to as “all” because all the Divine beneficence of the preceding *sefirot* flows into it and through it to *malchut*.

In the verse quoted, *yesod* is described as positing its seed *on* the earth, i.e., on the surface of the earth, rather than *in* the earth.

¹ Genesis 7:20.

² *Ibid.* 6:12.

³ *Ibid.* 38:9.

⁴ 1 Chronicles 29:11.

In this way, [*Nukva*] was “destroyed,” for it could not elevate feminine water at all. Therefore [G-d] brought the flood upon them.

Since the flow from *yesod* was directed toward the forces of selfishness and evil, rather toward *Nukva*, *Nukva* could not elicit the flow of Divine beneficence toward it. “Elevating feminine water” is the allegorical term for arousing or eliciting flow from above.

[Normally, *Nukva* can] elevate her feminine water, which is states of *gevurah*. And when the masculine water mates with her states of *gevurah* [in her feminine water], the states of *gevurah* are sweetened.

As we have seen previously, the feminine principle is constructed out of states of *gevurah*, since it needs to be very judgmental in order to interface with the material world, which is *a priori* antithetical to G-dliness. In order that these states of *gevurah* not leave her with an entirely negative attitude, she must periodically “mate” with the male principle, in which *chesed* predominates. This mitigation of *Nukva*’s *gevurah*-states by *Z’eir Anpin*’s *chesed*-states is termed “sweetening” the *gevurah*.

This is the meaning of “...to work it,” [which, according to the sages, refers to] the active commandments, for [by performing the active commandments] we draw down masculine water upon us. “...and to guard it” refers to the passive commandments, which guarded the garden so that evil could not attach itself.

“And G-d took the man and place him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it.”⁵ The sages comment: “‘To work it’ refers to the active commandments, while ‘to guard it’ refers to the passive commandments.”⁶ Here, the active commandments elicit the masculine water while the passive commandments are feminine water. The passive commandments are clearly associated with *gevurah*, the judgmentality that guards the garden from intrusion by forces antithetical to G-d consciousness.

But in the present case, [i.e., that of the world before the flood], there was no masculine water at all; rather, there were only severe states of judgment.

Unable to be “sweetened” by “mating” with masculine water (which was diverted into the forces of evil by the sin of wasting seed), the feminine *gevurah* states remained in their full force. This predominance of *gevurah* in the world precipitated the flood.

It is known that the five states of judgment are the five letters of the Name *Elokim*, and that they originate in the *hei* of this Name. Each of these states of *gevurah* comprises ten sub-levels. This is the significance of the *hei-yud* of the Name *Elokim*, meaning 5 times 10.

The Name *Elokim*, we know, is associated with the left axis of the *sefirot*, that of *gevurah*. The *chesed-gevurah-tiferet-netzach-hod* of this Name are inter-included of ten sub-*sefirot* each, giving 50 total sub-states of *gevurah*.

The numerical value of the letters *hei* and *yud* are 5 and 10, respectively.

These are the fifteen cubits [of water depth] that ascended [above the highest mountaintop].

The 15 cubits allude to the 5 and the 10 of the Name *Elokim*.

⁵ Genesis 2:15.

⁶ *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, *Likutei Midrashim MiKetav Yad* 4; *Yalkut Reuveini* quoting “Midrash”; *Zohar* 1:27a.

The water is the feminine water mentioned above, from which the *hei-yud* had been withdrawn, leaving *alef-lamed-mem* of *Elokim*.

The states of *gevurah* within the feminine water, as stated, could not be “sweetened” by the masculine water and form part of the harmonious functioning of the masculine and feminine principles, so they separated from the feminine water and assumed a life of their own, so to speak. The fifteen cubits of water allude to the absence of the (5 x 10) states of *gevurah* from the feminine water.

This is the mystical meaning of the word “above,” for it can be read to mean “above the *hei*,” [referring to the states of *gevurah*] that were withdrawn above the *hei* [i.e., above the feminine water].

These states of *gevurah* ascended above her head, i.e., to the level of the upper third of *tiferet* [of *Z’eir Anpin*].

We have seen previously that *Nukva* is positioned initially such that the top of her head is level with the line dividing the upper third of *Z’eir Anpin*’s *tiferet* from its lower two-thirds. This simply means that *Nukva* expresses directly only the lower *midot* of *Z’eir Anpin*. *Chesed*, *gevurah*, and the upper third of *tiferet* are the “pure” *midot*; the *midot* oriented toward external expression are the lower two-thirds of *tiferet*, *netzach*, and *hod*. (*Yesod* and *malchut* are technically the drive toward and means of expression of the *midot*, rather than *midot* proper.)

The upper third of *tiferet* is the intellect of *tiferet*; the lower two thirds of *tiferet* are the *chesed-gevurah-tiferet* and *netzach-hod-yesod* of *tiferet*. The intellect of any *sefirah* is oriented chiefly towards its source in the *sefirot* above it, while the *midot* of that *sefirah* are oriented chiefly outwards and downwards, towards expression in the realms below it.

They continued to ascend to the level of *chesed* and *gevurah*, which are called “the mountains,” as opposed to *netzach* and *hod*, which are called “the hills.”

Mountains can be envisioned as protrusions from the earth; the expression of the earth’s “desire” or “tendency” to reach beyond itself. Thus, the *midot*, oriented outward toward external reality, are “protrusions” of the *partzuf* outward. Since the intensity of consciousness is greater in *chesed* and *gevurah* than it is in *netzach* and *hod*, the former are called “mountains” relative to the latter, which are called “hills.”

As is known, in the generation of the flood, *Z’eir Anpin* and *Nukva* were back to back. This is alluded to by the two words “mountain,” “mountain,” whose numerical values are that of the Name *Elokim* in regression [plus 5, for the value of the five letters of the Name⁷].

Because of the sins of the generation, *Z’eir Anpin* and *Nukva* could not face each other; they were not oriented toward mutual cross-fertilization, as we mentioned above.

The word for “mountain” is *har* (*hei-reish*): 5 + 200 = 205.

The regression of the Name *Elokim* (*alef-lamed-hei-yud-mem*) is:

alef, *alef-lamed*, *alef-lamed-hei*, *alef-lamed-hei-yud*, *alef-lamed-hei-yud-mem*.

The numerical value of this regression is:

$$1 + (1 + 30) + (1 + 30 + 5) + (1 + 30 + 5 + 10) + (1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40) =$$

$$5(1) + 4(30) + 3(5) + 2(10) + 1(40) =$$

$$5 + 120 + 15 + 20 + 40 = 200.$$

⁷ See *Likutei Torah, Shemot*, s.v. *U-Moshe Hayah Ro’eh Tzon*.

Thus, we see that the back-to-back state of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*, alluded to by the “mountains” of *chesed* and *gevurah* being submerged in the water, alludes in turn to the regression of the Name *Elokim*, i.e., the withdrawal of the Divine beneficence indicated by this Name from reality.

Thus, [*Nukva*'s] states of *gevurah* ascended to this level. It is know that at this level is where *yesod* of *Ima* [reaches and stops] and is revealed, and that the source of [*Nukva*'s] states of *gevurah* is in *yesod* of *Ima*.

Yesod of *Ima*, as we know, is the drive within the intellect for expression. It descends to the level of *chesed* and *gevurah* of *Z'eir Anpin*, for that is as far as the intellect can descend and act as the motivating force behind the expression of the emotions. That is, *chesed* and *gevurah* of *Z'eir Anpin* are the lowest levels that sustain any “memory” of the intellect that spawned them. Subsequent levels must take the inspiration of the intellect but “forget” the idea itself in order to concentrate on getting the conclusion of the idea out into the world.

Ima, the *partzuf* of *binah*, is associated with the left axis of the *sefirot*, and thus its drive toward expression is the source of the *gevurah*-aspect of *Nukva*.

This is the meaning of the *Zohar*'s statement that in the flood “the lower waters mixed with the upper waters.” The meaning is also that the states of *gevurah* in her “rain” mixed with the states of *gevurah* in *Ima*.

In the flood, the *gevurah*-states of *Nukva* could not, as we saw, be “sweetened” by her “husband,” *Z'eir Anpin*, so they had to return to their source in their “mother,” *Ima*, to be rectified. The flood was thus the immersion of the world in the original intellect, or idea, that gave rise to it, in order to renew it. True, this was a purification process, just as a return to the original intellectual construct that gave rise to one's emotional makeup is a purifying experience. However, such a flood of renewing energy can also be destructive, destroying the imperfect, corrupt, degenerate emotional makeup (“world”) that was spawned by that idea but developed along selfish lines.

This is probably why most people tend to avoid facing the real issues in life. Tracing the threads of our existence back to their source offers the promise of renewal, purification, and rejuvenation, but the price is the potential destruction of the “world” or “civilization” we have carefully constructed to serve our own ends.

This is the mystical meaning of the verse, “all the wellsprings of the abyss split open...”⁸ referring to the states of *gevurah* in Rachel [i.e., *Nukva*], “...and the storehouses of heaven were opened,” referring to *yesod* of *Ima*, located in “heaven,” i.e., the top third of *tiferet*.

In this context, the lower waters, the abyss, are the feminine waters of *Nukva*, and the upper waters, the storehouses of heaven, are the waters of *yesod* of *Ima*. “Heaven” is often associated with *tiferet*, as contrasted to “earth,” which indicates *malchut*.

The words for “and the storehouses...” may be seen as 15 + 200, referring to the 200 regressive manifestations of the Name *Elokim*. The rest of the letters, together with the *kolel*, are 15; these are the 15 letters of the regression of *Elokim*.

The phrase “and the storehouses of heaven were opened” is composed of 15 letters. If we consider the *reish* of the word for “storehouses” (*arubot*) separately, this leaves 14 letters. 14 plus the *kolel* (1) is 15.

We saw above that the numerical value of the regression of the Name *Elokim* is 200, and if we count the letters used in this regression we see that they are 15 in number. 200 is the numerical value of the letter *reish*.

This is the mystical significance of the word for “flood” [*mabul*]. They issue via the back of *Z'eir Anpin*, for that is where the regressions [“backs”] of the 72-

⁸ Genesis 7:11.

Name, the 63-Name, and the 45-Name are situated. These use 26 letters; 3 times 26, gives 78, the numerical value of the word for “flood.”

The word used for “regression” in the text is *achorayim*, which literally means “back.” We are bidden to visualize the Name facing away from us, returning upward to its source. We first see the back of the first letter, then the first two, then the first three, and so on.

The 72-Name is spelled **yud-vav-dalet hei-yud vav-yud-vav hei-yud**.

The regression of this Name is:

yud-vav-dalet			
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud		
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud	vav-yud-vav	
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud	vav-yud-vav	hei-yud

The 63-Name is spelled **yud-vav-dalet hei-yud vav-alef-vav hei-yud**.

The regression of this Name is:

yud-vav-dalet			
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud		
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud	vav-alef-vav	
yud-vav-dalet	hei-yud	vav-alef-vav	hei-yud

The 45-Name is spelled **yud-vav-dalet hei-alef vav-alef-vav hei-alef**.

The regression of this Name is:

yud-vav-dalet			
yud-vav-dalet	hei-alef		
yud-vav-dalet	hei-alef	vav-alef-vav	
yud-vav-dalet	hei-alef	vav-alef-vav	hei-alef

In each case, it can be seen that 26 letters are used in the regression.

Mabul: *mem-beit-vav-lamed* = 40 + 2 + 6 + 30 = 78.

The word *mabul* thus alludes to the withdrawal of the Divine life-force indicated by these iterations of the Name *Havayah* from the world.

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When Noah came out of the ark after the flood, G-d re-articulated the seven Noahide commandments to him. Included in this is the prohibition of tearing the flesh off a living animal, which generalizes to causing unnecessary pain to animals.

Regarding killing animals, it is mentioned in the *Zohar*⁹ that no creature was created purposelessly.

It is [therefore] forbidden to kill it purposelessly.

As the sages state: “All that the Holy One, blessed be He, created, He created only for His honor, as it is written, ‘All that is called in My Name and for My honor, I created it, I formed it, I even made it.’”¹⁰

We will see now how the Arizal took this statement to extreme conclusions, conducting himself with extreme piety in this matter.

My teacher [the Arizal] was very careful not to kill any bug, even the smallest and lowliest, such as fleas, lice, flies, and the like, even when they bit him.

We know what the sages say, commenting on the verse, “His enemies will also make peace with him,”¹¹ that some say this refers to the dog and others say this refers to the snake, and still others say this refers to the flea.¹²

This idea is the answer of Rabbi Elazar to Rabbi Chizkiyah recorded in the *Zohar*,¹³ where the mystical meaning of the verse, “Will the snake bite without whispering?”¹⁴ is explained.

Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Chizkiyah were walking and came across a snake. Rabbi Chizkiyah was about to kill it, but Rabbi Elazar told him not to. When Rabbi Chizkiyah protested, saying that it is a dangerous creature, Rabbi Elazar quoted the above verse, interpreting it to mean that a snake only bites a person if G-d “whispers” to him to do so. G-d created snakes in order to kill certain people and thereby prevent them from doing some evil.

To be sure, we should not kill any creature unnecessarily, but refraining from killing animals that pose a threat to human life (or communicate diseases) contradicts the requirements of Jewish law, and it is doubtful whether any Torah authority would permit this. Indeed, it is permitted to kill harmful snakes on the Sabbath, when killing is otherwise altogether prohibited.

The Arizal, we may presume, did not have to worry about leaving snakes alive because he did not have to fear being stuck down by one to prevent him from sinning. On the other hand, we see that he was bitten by insects and bugs. The question is how the Arizal could refrain from killing snakes and the like and allow them to pose a threat to others’ lives. Perhaps the Arizal only meant that we should not kill snakes in their natural, wild habitat, but that if they venture into heavily peopled areas, we should kill them (or if possible, return them back to the wild).

But all of this is just conjecture. It could just as well be that the Arizal advocated avoiding killing creatures altogether, even at the expense of human life.

It is also not proper to kill or despise lice, which are born and created out of sweat. This is true especially [of lice produced on the heads] of good people. For sweat is the excess [energy] of the person and his dross, and from it these lice are created. This being the case, it is a boon and a rectification for the person when lice are created out of the sweat of his body, for in this way his excess, dross, and evil is excreted. [Since they perform a positive function], we should not despise them.

⁹ 2:68b.

¹⁰ *Avot* 6:11; *Isaiah* 43:7.

¹¹ *Proverbs* 16:7.

¹² *Y. Terumah* 8:3.

¹³ 2:68b.

¹⁴ *Ecclesiastes* 10:11.

* * *

After the flood, Noah became drunk and was castrated by his third son, Ham. His first two sons, Shem and Japheth, covered him. When he awoke, he blessed Shem and Japheth and cursed Ham together with Ham's son, Canaan. "He said, 'Cursed be Canaan, he will be a servant of servants to his brothers.' And he said, 'Blessed be G-d, the G-d of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. Let G-d grant beauty to Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.'"¹⁵

Let us understand why [Noah] used the Name *Havayah* in blessing Shem and the Name *Elokim* in blessing Japheth. Also, [let us understand] why he cursed Canaan and not Ham, who committed the sin.

The explanation: Noah and his three sons in the ark personified *yesod* and its three hues. These [three hues] are *netzach*, personified by Shem; *hod*, personified by Ham; and *yesod*, personified by Japheth.

This is alluded to in the verse, "and Joseph was good looking."¹⁶

The words for "good looking" are *yefeh to'ar*. When this expression is abbreviated according to the conventions of the technique known as *notrikon*, the word *yefet*, which is also the name Japheth, is formed. Alternatively, the feminine form of *yefeh to'ar*, *yefat to'ar*, is used of Joseph's mother Rachel.¹⁷ The word *yefat* (spelled *yud-pei-tav*) can be vocalized to read *Yefet*, Japheth. In either case, inasmuch as Joseph is always associated with the *sefirah* of *yesod*, it follows that Japheth is also associated with *yesod*.

Now, a higher entity always retains a residue of the lower entities that pass through it, whereas the lower entities do not retain anything of the higher entity [they pass through]. Therefore, the *shin* of *Shem* alludes to the three axes of *netzach-hod-yesod*.

The flow of Divine beneficence flows first through *netzach*, then through *hod*, and then through *yesod* to *malchut*. Of the triad of *netzach-hod-yesod*, *netzach* is the highest, and thus primary one of the three. It retains a residue of *hod* and *yesod* as what will be revealed as their light flows through it.

This is alluded to by the *shin* in the name of *Shem*, the son of Noah associated with *netzach*. The *shin* comprises three vertical "stems" resting on a horizontal base. These three stems allude to the three *sefirot* of *netzach-hod-yesod*.

The numerical value of the initials of Ham and Japheth is 18.

Ham: *chet-mem*; Japheth: *yud-pei-tav*. $Chet-yud = 8 + 10 = 18$.

This is because *yesod* re-includes all three.

In *netzach*, the name *Havayah* predominates, for the numerical value of *Shem* (340) is that of the Name *Havayah* (26) plus that of the Name *Shakai* (314). Noah therefore said, "Blessed be G-d [*Havayah*], the G-d of Shem," using the Name *Havayah*.

¹⁵ Genesis 9:25-27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 39:6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 29:17.

Shem: shin-mem: 300 + 40 = 340.

Shakai: shin-dalet-yud: 300 + 4 + 40 = 314.

When expanded consciousness enters [*Z'eir Anpin*], the three Names *Elokim* of constricted consciousness are relegated to *yesod*. These three Names *Elokim* are filled. The first is filled with *yud*'s, producing the numerical value of 300.

The Name *Elokim* is spelled *alef-lamed-hei-yud-mem*. When these letters are spelled out, using the letter *yud* to spell out the letter *hei*, we have:

<i>alef</i>	<i>alef</i>	1
	<i>lamed</i>	30
	<i>pei</i>	80
<i>lamed</i>	<i>lamed</i>	30
	<i>mem</i>	40
	<i>dalet</i>	4
<i>hei</i>	<i>hei</i>	5
	<i>yud</i>	10
<i>yud</i>	<i>yud</i>	10
	<i>vav</i>	6
	<i>dalet</i>	4
<i>mem</i>	<i>mem</i>	40
	<i>mem</i>	40
total		300

[The numerical value of] the second [is calculated as follows]: [We consider first the numerical value of] the Name *Elokim* itself, then the five letters of the Name *Elokim*, and finally the 13 letters used to spell it out. We thus have $86 + 5 + 13 = 104$.

The numerical value of the Name *Elokim* by itself is:

alef-lamed-hei-yud-mem: 1 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 40 = 86.

It can be seen from the chart above that 13 letters are used to spell out the Name *Elokim*.

[The numerical value of] the third [is calculated by considering] the numerical value of the Name *Elokim* by itself, ignoring the number of its letters, [i.e., 86].

The sum of all this together is the value of Japheth.

$300 + 104 + 86 = 490$.

Japheth (*yud-pei-tav*): $10 + 80 + 400 = 490$.

Thus, we have again established the association between Japheth and *yesod*.

This is why [Noah] said, "Let G-d grant beauty to Japheth," [using the Name *Elokim*].

He did not curse Ham, who is associated with *hod*, because even though it is situated on the axis of *gevurah*, it is still holy. [It remains so until] it extends below and is appropriated by the forces of evil. He therefore cursed Canaan, who issues from [Ham] after it extends below.

All that needs to be cursed of *hod* is its evil “progeny,” represented by Ham’s progeny, Canaan.

—translated from *Likutei Torah* and *Sha’ar HaMitzvot*

Parashat Noach [fourth installment]

The installment continues the translation of the passage begun in the first installment.

When Noah did not possess the mentality required to couple, he was like a corpse, and was therefore hidden inside *malchut*, i.e., the ark.

Noah, as stated previously, personified *yesod* of *Abba*, the organ of procreation. The sages state that “there is no erection without *da’at*,”¹ referring to the fact that in order for procreation to occur, *yesod* must be infused with at least some level of consciousness. Without this presence of mentality, the organ is flaccid, or, in the terminology of the sages, “dead.”²

The word for “ark” (*teivah*) also means “box,” alluding to a casket.

[This was] in order that the forces of evil not be able to benefit from him.

As long as he was not inspired by holy consciousness, the danger existed that he could be aroused by unholy consciousness and propagate evil, as happened with Adam.

Indeed, he was forbidden to conduct marital relations [inside the ark], since [during the flood] there was no coupling above, [in the spiritual realms,] for the [upper] three handbreadths [of the earth] were dissolved.

Marital relations were forbidden in the ark because it was a period of crisis and suffering for the world,³ and this ambiance is not conducive to holy marital relations, which must be conducted in a spirit of optimism and joy.

The upper three handbreadths of the earth signified the upper three *sefirot* of *malchut*,⁴ the intellect of *malchut*. The fact that they were being dissolved indicated a lack of presence of mind in *malchut*. Since *malchut*, also, did not have the proper mentality for relations, they did not occur.

Shem, Ham, and Japheth personified the intellect, and emerged via *yesod* in order to rectify [this situation].

Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born in order to reinstate the presence of holy mentality in *yesod* so that proper coupling could occur.

To explain:

The origin of the intellect are the letters *yud-hei-vav* [of the Name *Havayah*].

Usually we consider only the first two letters of the Name *Havayah* to be identified with the intellect, while the *vav* indicates the *midot*. In this context, however, we are talking about what occurs in *Ima*, which is entirely a *partzuf* of intellect; thus, even the *midot* there are the *midot* of the intellect.

Inasmuch as the final *hei* of the Name *Havayah* signifies *malchut*, the means of expression “that has nothing of its own,” it is proper to consider only the first three letters of the Name *Havayah* when discussing the *content* of *Ima*.

¹ *Yevamot* 53b.

² For example, *Mishneh Torah, Isurei Biah* 4:11.

³ Rashi on *Genesis* 7:7.

⁴ In the previous installment I wrote that they signify the *lower* three *sefirot* of *malchut*. This should be corrected to the *upper* three.

[These letters] emerge via *yesod* [of *Ima*] to rectify [*Z'eir Anpin*].

I.e., to introduce holy intellect into it.

The Name *Havayah* becomes vested in the Name *Ekyeh*, the letters *yud-hei-vav* [of the Name *Havayah* becoming vested] in the letters *alef-hei-yud* [of the Name *Ekyeh*].

This is the first stage, and as we have seen, the Name *Ekyeh* is associated with *Ima*.

The *yud-hei-vav* [then] extend through the six extremities of *Z'eir Anpin*, which are manifest as the six permutations constructed by the letters *yud-hei-vav*, whose numerical value is 126.

$$Yud-hei-vav = 10 + 5 + 6 = 21.$$

$$21 \times 6 = 126.$$

The six permutations are:

gevurah	chesed
<i>hei-vav-yud</i>	<i>yud-hei-vav</i>
	tiferet
	<i>vav-yud-hei</i>
hod	netzach
<i>hei-yud-vav</i>	<i>yud-vav-hei</i>
	yesod
	<i>vav-hei-yud</i>

Note that the permutations on the right axis begin with *yud*, those on the left axis with *hei*, and those on the middle axis with *vav*. This is because the *sefirot* above the right and left axes are *chochmah* and *binah*, associated respectively with the letters *yud* and *hei* of the Name *Havayah*.

The six permutations of *yud-hei-vav* comprise 18 letters. [18 is the numerical value of the word] “life” [*chai*], referring to the *ruach* of *malchut*.

$$Chai: chet-yud = 8 + 10 = 18.$$

The *ruach* of *malchut* is the emotions of *malchut*. The influx of intellect from *Ima*, as embodied in the permutations of *yud-hei-vav*, has thus restored the *ruach* of *malchut*.

When 18 is added to 126, the result is 144, the numerical value of the word “before” or “not yet” [*kedem*], which refers to the *nefesh* of *malchut*.

$$Kedem: kuf-dalet-mem = 100 + 4 + 40 = 144.$$

Thus, the *nefesh*, the *netzach-hod-yesod* of *malchut*, has been restored.

The three letters *yud-hei-vav* that are the origin of the intellect of *Z'eir Anpin* and from which are derived these six permutations of *yud-hei-vav*, express the 63-Name. [63 plus] *kedem* [144] equal the numerical value of the word for “light” [*or*, 206, plus the *kolel*]. This is the *neshamah* of *malchut*.

The 63-Name is associated with *binah*.

$$63 + 144 = 207.$$

Thus, the intellect, the *neshamah* of *malchut* has been restored.

When we consider the 18 letters [which compose the 6 permutations of *yud-hei-vav*] together with the three root-letters [*yud-hei-vav*], we have 21 letters. This number added to 207 yields the numerical value of the word for “blessing” [*berachah*, 227, plus the *kolel*].

$$18 + 3 = 21; 21 + 207 = 228.$$

$$\text{Berachah: } \textit{beit-reish-kaf-hei} = 2 + 200 + 20 + 5 = 227.$$

Thus, the union of *yesod* and *malchut* is blessed, and can occur.

We will now see where these permutations are alluded to in the story of Noah.

The 18 letters of the six permutations allude to the “seven by seven” ritually pure animals, i.e., 14, and the “two by two” ritually impure animals, i.e., 4.

The idiom for “seven by seven” is simply “seven seven,” implying $7 + 7$, or 14. The same is true for “two by two,” or “two two,” or 4.

$$14 + 4 = 18.$$

The pure and impure animals are derived from the *hei* of the *yud-hei-vav*.

The letter *hei* is associated with animals chiefly by virtue of the fact that the latter *hei* of the Name *Havayah* is associated with the 52-Name, and 52 is the numerical value of the word for “animal” (*beheimah*). True, we are dealing with the *first hei* of the Name *Havayah*, but in general, the two *hei*'s of the Name *Havayah* are the feminine sides of the two-letter pairs, while the *yud* and *vav* are the masculine sides. The “feminine” here means “recipient” or “means of expression,” and this is the role played by animals vis-à-vis human beings.

[Specifically,] the pure animals are derived from the letters *hei* in the permutations *yud-hei-vav* and *yud-vav-hei*, aligned with *chesed* and *netzach*.

The impure animals are derived from the letters *hei* in the permutations *hei-vav-yud* and *hei-yud-vav*, aligned with *gevurah* and *hod*.

As for what is derived from the permutations *vav-yud-hei* and *vav-hei-yud*, aligned with *tiferet* and *yesod*, these animals are neither pure nor impure. They are alluded to by the phrase, “from the animals that are not pure”; this implies [animals that on the one hand are not pure,] but it does not say “impure” [either].

It is not entirely clear what animals are being referred to here.

To explain:

Whatever extends [too far] below on the axis of *gevurah* becomes evil. This is the “dross of gold” mentioned in the *Zohar*,⁵ which is black.

Dross is the rust that forms on the surface of molten metal.

Even though they are derived from *gevurah*, which is red, when they are manifest below, they become black. This is the meaning of our sages statement that “black is a defective form of red.”⁶

⁵ 2:203a.

In contrast, the states of *gevurah* that descend on the *right* axis always remain red, and they become the *nefesh* of the evil shells. There are sparks of holiness within them that fell [into them] when the vessels [of the world of *Tohu*] were shattered. These are the *vav-hei* [of the Name *Havayah*], the *vav* being the life-force of the male and the *hei* being the life-force of the female of the evil shells.

Since the right axis is not inherently one of *gevurah*, the *gevurah* within it does not descend as much as the *sefirot* on the left axis can.

When a person divulges a secret to a sinner, he causes [the evil embodied by this person] to couple with the *hei* openly and the forces of evil abduct the offspring [of this union]. This is the mystical meaning of the verse, “Do not reveal a secret to another.”⁷

The “secret” here is the holiness hidden within reality or the inner powers or potentials that we possess to do good. When these are shared with people of evil intent, we are guilty allegorically of spilling our seed, causing our potentials to be diverted to unholy purposes.

To explain:

We have already said that the *hei* of *Atzilut* is manifest in *Atzilut*, and that the *vav* of this *hei* is the masculine principle while the *dalet* is the feminine principle. They are manifest as [the *partzufim*] Jacob and Leah.

The form of the letter *hei* can be seen as a *dalet* with a smaller *vav* inside it. The *hei*, which indicates *malchut* of *Atzilut*, thus alludes to the union of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva* that occurs within it.

When someone reveals a secret to a wicked person, he causes *yesod*, which is that *vav*, to channel its effulgence to the powers of evil. This is alluded to by the words “...a secret to another,” for the numerical value of the word for “secret” [*sod*] is 70, referring to the 70 angelic princes [of the non-Jewish nations].

The non-Jewish nations, at least until their rectification in the Messianic future, embody the fallen version of Adam that chose to be associated with the materiality of this world and thus oppose the revelation of Divine will on earth. There are 70 archetypal nations, enumerated in Genesis 10. Their spiritual sources, the angelic “princes,” are personifications of the different mentalities, or cultures, they each express. Each is a different variation (i.e., perversion) of the Torah, each emphasizing or expressing a different angle of it, preserving parts and distorting others.

The “wicked person” in this exposition can be, of course, a Jew just as well as a non-Jew. When a Jew identifies with a particular non-Jewish cultural mindset, he serves as a vehicle for that non-Torah take on life.

When a person reveals a secret to the wicked, he causes *yesod* to channel its flow into these 70 [princes] and they [can then] overpower *malchut*. G-d intended that they should all be subject to *malchut*, under the purview of the Jewish people, but he effects the opposite, giving the forces of evil power over them.

This is the mystical meaning of the sages’ statement, “When wine enters, the secret comes out.”⁸ “Wine” refers to the 70 angelic princes [of the nations], likened

⁶ *Nidah* 20a.

⁷ Proverbs 25:9.

⁸ *Eiruvin* 65a.

to intoxicating wine. When this “wine” enters to receive [flux] from *yesod*, “the secret exits,” i.e., *malchut*, which is the “secret” [*sod*] of *yesod*.

The numerical value of the word for “wine” (*yayin*, *yud-yud-nun* = 10 + 10 + 50) is 70, alluding to the 70 nations. Alcohol intoxicates a person, blurring his perception, just as the non-Jewish cultures are each a “blurring” of the truth of the Torah. Just as blurred perception displaces the sober mentality in a drunk person, when the 70 princes enter to receive from *yesod*, they displace *malchut*.

Malchut here is called the “secret” because the word for “secret” (*sod*, *samech-vav-dalet* = 60 + 6 + 4) also equals 70, and *malchut* is the seventh *sefirah* of the emotions (which, when metamorphosed into a complete *partzuf*, can be thought of as possessing 70 sub-*sefirot*). The word for “secret” is also part of the word *yesod*, which can be considered as spelling *yud-sod*, “the secret of the *yud*.” The seminal drop of *chochmah* (the *yud*) is what *yesod* posits in *malchut*.

When a person reveals the secret to someone who is unworthy, he causes [the forces of evil] to receive from *yesod*, and they are warmed by it and produce offspring.

“Warmed” here means “aroused.” This usage is common in the Rabbinic idiom; the choice of it here will be clear now, as it is contrasted to the inherent “coldness” of evil.

This is the dynamic of “coldness,” as we will now explain.

The sages stated that G-d castrated the male Leviathan.

“And G-d created the great serpents [in the water]....”⁹ According to the sages, this refers to the Leviathan and its mate. But G-d saw that if they were to procreate, they would destroy the world, so He castrated the male and killed the female Leviathan and salted it; it will be served to the righteous in the meal celebrating the advent of the Messianic era.¹⁰

Thus, the Leviathan represents a power that if allowed to propagate would overcome the world, i.e., evil. G-d therefore has “castrated” evil, as will now be explained.

[Mystically,] this means that the *yesod* [of the forces of evil] does not connect with their *netzach* and *hod* as is the case in the realm of holiness, for the *netzach-hod-yesod* of holiness function as a unit and are therefore alluded to by the [single] letter *shin*.

The letter *shin* is formed of three vertical lines that join at the bottom. It thus alludes to *netzach-hod-yesod* functioning as a unit. The connection of *netzach* and *hod* to *yesod*, providing it with content, is what makes it potent, able to be “warmed up.”

But [the *yesod* of the forces of evil], being separate [from their *netzach* and *hod*], are alluded to by the letters *kuf-reish*. Thus, the word for “lie” [*sheker*] is formed.

The letters *kuf-reish* spell *kar*, “cold.”

All the letters of the Hebrew alphabet except for these two—*kuf* and *reish*—are “stable.” They either have solid base, or are “balanced,” consisting of a single vertical line (e.g., the *vav*) or have “mass” on either side of the single line they stand on (e.g., the *dalet* or *zayin*). These two, however, are “lopsided,” and appear as if ready to fall over at any minute.

⁹ Genesis 1:21.

¹⁰ Bava Batra 74b.

Thus, although by itself, *shin* is a “holy” letter and is balanced, when joined together with the *kuf* and *reish*, its potential lopsidedness (the three lines that it comprises do not join directly below its center of gravity) is added to theirs, and the word for “lie” is formed.

This is the inner meaning of the sages’ statement that “a lie has no feet”¹¹ or permanence, unless it is joined together with some words of truth.

A good lie always begins with a true statement, which gives it reliability.

To explain:

When [the forces of evil] receive from that *vav* inside the *hei* [of *malchut*], the *vav* inside this *hei* extends downward, forming the letter *kuf*—which was formerly a *hei*. The *dalet* was a *hei* from the *hei* that extends into *Beriah* when [the forces of evil] receive. And from that *vav* that was inside the *hei* is formed the *kuf*.

Beriah is the first world where self-awareness exists, and therefore where evil can assume an independent existence. The extension of the *hei*-become-*kuf* into *Beriah* is thus envisioned as a breach of the borders of holiness.

The *dalet* of the *hei* is also [transformed into part of the word for “lie”]: it possesses a *yud* on its back. This is the hinge on which the door rotates. When we remove that hinge-*yud*, the door falls off.

The extension to the right that distinguishes the *dalet* from the *reish* is seen as a small *yud*. The word *dalet* means “door,” so this *yud* can be seen as the “hinge” around which the *dalet* can be imagined to rotate. Without the *yud*, the *dalet* becomes a *reish*, an “evil,” unstable letter, and collapses.

To explain:

Yud signifies *chochmah*, which is manifest throughout *Z’eir Anpin* and *malchut* [i.e., *Nukva*], and it is what joins them together.

Chochmah is experienced through selflessness, as we have seen previously. Selflessness is what allows two opposites, such as the male and female principles, to unite.

[*Z’eir Anpin* and *Nukva*] are then called “one” [*echad*]: the brother of the *dalet*, *Z’eir Anpin* being the brother and *dalet* being *malchut*.

The word for “one” (*echad*) is spelled *alef-chet-dalet*. The first two letters of these three form the word for “brother” (*ach*, *aleft-chet*). Thus, the word for “one” can be seen as a compound of the words “brother of the *dalet*.” *Z’eir Anpin* and *Nukva* unite so closely they feel like brother and sister (which in fact, they are, since they are both offspring of *Abba* and *Ima*).

Even though *Z’eir Anpin* and *malchut* are separate *partzufim*, they become “one” because the *yud* joins them.

When the *yud* is removed from the *dalet* [it turns into a *reish*, and] the word for “one” [*echad*] becomes the word for “other” [*acher*]. This is [the “other” in the verse] “Do not reveal a secret to another.”

This also causes the *vav* to couple with the *hei* openly.

“Open” coupling is a violation of the modesty (*tzeniut*) that is supposed to characterize true, holy marital relations. By copulating “in the open,” the secret (the reproductive power, both in the male and in the female) is

¹¹ *Sotah* 35a.

shared with everyone (instead of only with the beloved), and thus some of it “spills” into the wrong places. Open coupling thus increases the power of evil.

But when the secrets of the Torah are revealed to the righteous, *yesod* directs its flux directly to *malchut*, these two being righteous, and then the *vav* with the *hei* ascend in the world of *Beriah* as “feminine waters” for *malchut*, and cause it to couple [with *Z’eir Anpin*].

This is thus a rectification for the evil coupling, in which the *vav* and *hei* are forced into the lower worlds to copulate there. “Feminine waters” is the Kabbalistic imagery for “arousal from below.”

But when the opposite is the case, it causes a coupling below, and then there is no rectification [for this] until the root of the problem is rectified.

There is a difference between the rectification required for those souls who issued through illicit seminal emission and that required for the *vav-hei*, which are the 11 spices of the incense.

The numerical value of *vav-hei* (6 + 5) is 11.

To elevate the sparks of the *vav-hei*, we give ourselves over to the unity [of G-d] in reciting the *Shema*. When we eat we also rectify [this]. By performing the commandments and studying the Torah we elicit [Divine beneficence] from the source of these above, so that it elevate those below also.

This is how we rectify the unholy descent of the *vav-hei* into the realms of evil adjacent to the world of *Beriah*. As for the souls propagated by Adam’s unholy seminal emissions—

Shem, Ham, and Japheth were the roots of those souls, and came to rectify them. But the Generation of the Dispersion ruined [their efforts], and said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower.”¹² [In effect,] they said that they saw those souls of the Generation of the Flood that did not ascend and that they did not have a body to ascend with. So they said, “Let us make them bodies from the evil shells.” This is alluded to by the word “Come.”

This will be explained presently.

Nimrod said, “Let us build ourselves a city,” referring to *malchut* of the forces of evil, “and a tower,” referring to *yesod* of the forces of evil.

“City” is another appellation for *malchut*, the *sefirah* of expression, inasmuch as letters are called “stones” and words “houses.” The “tower” is a phallic symbol.

G-d, however, foiled their plans, so that these souls not be totally ruined and left without rectification forever.

By confounding their language, or means of expression. Their “city” was thus destroyed.

Then Abraham came and rectified [them] through *chesed*. He revealed [Divine] *chesed* and thereby blinded [the forces of evil] and elevated the sparks of holiness.

¹² Genesis 11:3.

Nonetheless, he did not rectify [them] that much, so Isaac came and rectified [them] more than he did, using *gevurah*. The *gevurah* [Isaac revealed] struck [the forces of evil] and thereby elevated those souls from the realm of evil.

Then Jacob came and rectified [them] even more.

Using *tiferet*.

And when [his sons, the progenitors of] the twelve tribes came and went down to Egypt, these sparks were refined there and all ascended and were [totally] rectified.

Who was Pharaoh? Nimrod! [This can be seen from the fact that] just like [Nimrod] said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city,” so did Pharaoh say, “Come, let us be wise with them.”¹³

He decreed against the [Israelites’] sons, saying, “the newborn boys should be thrown into the river,” that is, into the water, so that they could be rectified in the water.

Although the earthly Pharaoh’s intentions were evil, he was unwittingly trying to rectify the souls that had become reincarnated in the generation of the Exodus by immersing them in water, which is a metaphor for the Torah.

But they were not fully rectified until they came to Marah, where they were all fully rectified.

At Marah, the Jews received their first commandments, as a sort of transitional law between the universal laws of the Noahides and the 613 commandments of the Torah.

Moses also rectified the *hei* of Abel’s name [*Hevel*], and thus then everything was rectified.

When Moses received the full Torah and transmitted it to the Jewish people, all the souls that made up Adam’s original soul were finally rectified.

—translated from *Likutei Torah*

¹³ Exodus 1:10.