

By Noah's Six Hundred and First Year, the Water Had Dried Up from the Earth

8: 6-14

DIG: Why did Noah send out a raven first? Why was a dove chosen instead of another bird? Why was the olive branch significant?

REFLECT: What kind of bird are you? Are you a raven or a dove? If you are a believer, do you have both natures? Which one are you living today? Do you love the things of God, or the things of the world (First Yochanan 2:15-17)?

While some people consider the Bible account of **the Flood** to be a myth, others cite evidence that **the ark** still exists. For example, in 1943 Ed Davis, a sergeant in the United States Army developed friendships with Lourd tribesmen who took him to their village near Mt. Ararat. From the village he could see in the distance something that they claimed to be **the ark**. Davis reported to have seen in the village items from **the ark**: a cage door, a shepherd staff, a metal hammer, dried beans, and so on.

In 1953 George Greene, an oil geologist, took several photographs from a helicopter of what appeared to be **the ark**. Though he has died and his photos are not available, more than thirty people have given sworn, written testimony that they saw his photos that showed **the ark** protruding from ice on Mt. Ararat.

In the late 1950s Gregor Schwinghammer claimed he saw **the ark** from an F-100 aircraft. He said it resembled a huge boxcar lying high on Mt. Ararat.¹⁵⁰

After forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark (8:6). This was the beginning of the end of **the Flood**. This **window** is not the side door (6:16), but a *hatch (hallon)*, presumably on **the ark's** roof or side.¹⁵¹ The **forty days** correspond to the **forty days** during which the rain fell and the waters rose; and **Noah** might assume that they would require the same time to recede as to rise.¹⁵²

And sent out a raven, which is an unclean bird. They are black, wild birds and are specifically mentioned in the Torah (**Leviticus 11:15; Deuteronomy 14:14; Job 38:41; Psalm 147:9; Proverbs 30:17**). Yet we are told that **God feeds the ravens** in **Luke 12:24**, and by a divine act they fed **Elijah** in **First Kings 17:6**. The **raven**, being an unclean animal, went out into the world and ate from the carcasses floating on the water. **And it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth (8:7).** It did not return to **the ark**. The mountain peaks were then visible and it could rest there.

Then he sent out a dove, which is a clean animal. They are white and have been domesticated. In the Scriptures it is used as a positive symbol. It is used as a symbol of the eyes of youth (Song of Solomon 1:15, 4:1, 5:12) and also a symbol of love (Song of Solomon 2:14, 5:2, 6:9). The dove is able to fly long distances (Psalm 55:6; Isaiah 60:8; Hosea 11:11). The purpose was to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground (8:8). The raven and the dove provide an important lesson for all of us.

The Bible teaches that the believer has two natures, an old and a new nature: **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (Second Corinthians 5:17)**. The clean and the unclean are together. You and I as believers have these two natures. Jesus said: **Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit (John 3:6)**. And Rabbi Saul writes: **I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature, for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out (Romans 7:18)**. Paul spoke of this struggle between the old nature, the raven, and the new nature, the dove, in the life of a believer.

The raven went out into the world and feasted on dead carcasses. Back and forth, he restlessly went up and down. *This is a picture of the old nature* because it loves the things of this world and feasts on them (First John 2:15-17). That is the reason people make excuses for the bad things they do. Does this mean you have to be perfect? No, certainly not. But you do have an old nature and you need to confess your sins (First John 1:8-10), not make excuses for them. As Kefa wrote: **Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul (First Peter 2:11)**.

The dove, on the other hand, went out into a judged world, but she found no rest, no satisfaction and she returned to the ark. *The dove represents the believer in this world*. The raven went out into the world and loved it. When he found those old dead carcasses, he probably thought the millennium had arrived! But we are supposed to be in the world, not of the world (Yochanan 17:13-16). We are supposed to live in it, but not fall in love with it. The dove recognized what kind of world she was in and she found no rest. The only rest for us in this world is in Christ.¹⁵³

But the dove could find no place to set its feet because there was water over all the surface of the earth. Doves will only land where it is dry and clean. They also prefer valleys to mountains. **Even the tops of the mountains, which had by now appeared, were so saturated that they offered no resting place for the dove**. So its return signaled that the valleys were still flooded. So it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark a second time (8:9-10).

When the dove returned to him in the evening, having remained out longer than before, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! **The rabbis teach that the leaf was brought from the garden of Eden.** Olive trees only grow on the lower slopes of the mountains. The valleys were still flooded, but Noah knew that the water was almost gone and had receded from the earth (8:11).

He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again a third time, but this time it did not return to him because the earth was dry by then (8:12). Even the valleys had dried up. The judgment was over, and peace had returned to the earth.

By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundredth and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering, or part of the roof, from the ark and saw that the surface was dry (8:13). In a very real sense, the period after the Flood marks a new beginning for the human race. It is again the first day of the first month of the first year of mankind's new life. **By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry (8:14).** When Noah left the ark mankind would enter into a new dispensation.