

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

The dove kept on returning with nothing in its mouth, an indication that the vegetation had not begun to grow. Noach also sent out the dove (seven days later) to see whether the waters had subsided. At first, the dove found no place that was dry. The dove returned. Seven days later, it was sent out again; this time it returned with a bitter olive in its mouth. The dove was symbolically implying, "Better that my food be bitter, but from G-d's Hand, than sweet as honey, but dependent upon mortal man." *Chazal* are teaching us an important lesson: better even the most bitter food eaten in freedom, than the sweetest food given in servitude. If one would only heed this lesson, life would be so much simpler.

In any event, the *Chasan Sofer* (quoted by his son, *Horav Shimon Sofer, zl*, in his *Michtav Sofer*) distinguishes between the mission of the raven and the mission of the dove. The raven was sent out to see whether there was any dry land, whether there was any vegetation on the ground. The dove was sent out to see whether the waters had subsided. We find two types of people. The first is the *nediv*, generous, kind-hearted, magnanimous person who supports and sustains those in need – and does so joyfully. He despises taking from others, because he is a giver by nature. His counterpart is the cruel scoundrel who believes that life is all about taking and hoarding – never sharing, never giving away anything of his own, regardless of the supplicant's need or circumstance.

The two birds that were Noach's messengers represent these two very dissimilar individuals. The *yonah*, dove, represents *Klal Yisrael*, who is referred to in *Shir HaShirim* (7:2) as *bas nediv*, daughter of nobles (*nediv* alludes to Avraham *Avinu*). A *nediv lev/nedivus halev*, generosity of heart and a *nediv*, nobleman, both have in common that they sustain others; they do not seek for themselves. The *oraiv*, raven, is a cruel, selfish bird that preys on anything it can. Noach was well aware of the incongruent natures of these two birds. Noach knew that if the dove saw that the water had subsided, it would not return to the Ark. It did not want to be sustained by others. As long as an opportunity for food availed itself, it would seek it out. Hashem would see to its sustenance – not man. The raven, on the other hand, required a full meal, ready and waiting. If there were no vegetation in place for it, the raven would come back to the Ark. When the dove did not return, Noach understood that the waters had subsided. When the raven did not return, Noach saw this as a sign that the vegetation had begun to sprout. He knew his birds.