

And as for Me – Behold, I am about to bring the Flood-waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh. (6:17)

The Flood was the greatest destruction of all time in the sense that it destroyed almost the entire world. It came as a Heavenly punishment to a generation of human beings that had gone totally awry. Evil was rampant; immorality was a way of life; idol worship was their mode of religious belief. Hashem gave them 120 years to repent, while Noach, his righteous emissary, labored strenuously building an Ark to save those who would repent. Then He gave them a seven-day reprieve to observe the seven-day *shivah*, mourning period, for Mesushelach. Perhaps the passing of this righteous person would arouse some positive thoughts, some contrition that would lead to repentance. Sadly, no one was interested. Hashem sent water to destroy them all. The earth was awash. People, animals, the entire world society was wiped out, drowned in a deluge of water.

Why did Hashem use water? Was there no other way to destroy the world? We have a rule that Hashem gives retribution *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure. How does this rule apply to the punishment of water? What relationship exists between the flood and the various sins committed by the generation of the Flood? I recently saw a noteworthy dissertation concerning the concept of water, which I quote with my own supplement.

The *Pirkei D'R'Eliezer* writes, concerning Yonah *HaNavi's* fleeing from Hashem: "On the fifth day, Yonah ran from G-d. Why did he flee?... He said to himself, 'I know that this nation will repent. Now they repent and Hashem will release His anger on *Yisrael*.'" How did Yonah run from Hashem? He took a ship going to Tarshish, paid his fare and settled in as a passenger. Why did he choose a ship? Why use water as a means of travel? Why not take a donkey, a camel, travel the desert? He went out of his way to locate a ship and paid cash in full prior to the trip. The *Midrash* explains, "Yonah said, 'I am running to a place where Hashem has not rested His Glory. Concerning Heaven and earth, Hashem rested His Name during Creation. Not so on water.'" "On the fifth day," This corresponds with the fifth day of Creation when Hashem said, "Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures." The creatures of the deep waters were created then. Water began to function on the fifth day. Yonah chose this day to run from G-d. Apparently, water symbolizes an entity of Creation from which Hashem removes His Presence.

In his commentary to *Bereishis 2:3*, *Ramban* writes: "The Six Creation Days represent all the days of the world, for the endurance of the world is six millennia. As on the first two days, the entire world was filled with nothing but water, so, too, for the first two millennia, the world was without anyone who was *korei b'shem Hashem*, called out in the Name of G-d. As on the third day, the dry land was beginning to appear; likewise, Avraham *Avinu*, at the age of forty-eight commenced his mission to reach out to a pagan world and teach them about Hashem."

Water symbolizes heresy. Water flows everywhere and can be halted from spreading only by placing borders around to contain it. Water has no parameters. One cannot stop water. It has no

form, no boundaries; it is literally unstoppable, unless it is contained by a solid wall. Water takes on the form of what container it is placed in. If it is spilled, it rolls and moves about at will.

This describes the sin of the *dor ha'mabul*, generation of the Flood. They acted freely, without restraint, without control whatsoever. They did whatever they wanted, wherever they wanted, with whomever they pleased. No parameters, no constraints, no boundaries. Pure lust, unrestrained sin, unimpeded evil, thoughtlessness of others, uncaring: these are words which describe the generation of the Flood. They acted like water. They were destroyed by water. They catalyzed the land's transformation into water. When *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt, they achieved an exalted level of *Vayaaminu b'Hashem*, they believed in Hashem. As a result, the Almighty transformed the Red Sea into dry land. The water deferred to them.