

## And he sent out the raven, and it kept going and returning. (8:7)

The *Midrash* makes an amazing statement concerning Noach's behavior, which can serve as an important directive for us all. When his whole generation was condemned to extinction, he built an ark for himself, into which he brought the male and female of every species. He took seven pairs of each of the clean animals, while he took only a male and a female from among the unclean animals. Undoubtedly, after the flood, the demand for clean animals would be greater than that for their unclean counterpart.

At the end of the deluge, Noach wanted to ascertain the situation outside of the boat. Therefore, he sent out the raven, an unclean bird, to assess the situation. The raven refused its mission. Instead, it flew around outside, constantly returning to the ark. Each time it returned, it peered through the window to check upon the welfare of its female mate. *Chazal* say that the raven argued with Noach, "Why don't you send out one of the clean birds, since you have so many? If I go out and do not return the female raven will be left alone, and the world will lose an entire species of bird." It immediately pointed an accusing finger at Noach, as if to imply that he suspected Noach of incest with his mate. This was the height of ingratitude to the man who had saved his life and provided him with a home and comfort when all else was destroyed. Nonetheless, Noach stood up to this dreadful challenge. He preferred to be accused of the most heinous crime, rather than chance losing one clean animal.

*Rabbi M. Swift z.t.l.* applies the lesson of this *Midrash* to *Torah* leadership. Those who are responsible for the spiritual well-being of our people are often confronted with similar challenges. They must remain resolute in the face of mounting criticism, while they are striving to maintain the pristine traditions of the *Torah*. They find themselves adrift like the ark on a turbulent sea of indifference, fighting off the onslaught from the waves of confusion and apathy. They cannot and may not compromise even momentarily, lest this deluge of ignorance and charlatanism overcome their communities. How much more piercing is the pain when those for whom they have devoted their lives turn against their own leadership, demonstrating their true impurity! Yet, this is the challenge of *Torah* leadership, who must fight with heart and soul until the waters of ignorance subside and the banner of *Torah* is embraced by all.