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## The Noach Typologies

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Two Adams

The Torah relates the creation of man, the most complex of G-d's creations, in two parallel, consecutive versions. These accounts — eloquently explicated by R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z.t.z.l., in *The Lonely Man of Faith*<sup>1</sup> — paint complementary pictures of humankind:

According to the first chapter of the Torah, Adam is created "in G-d's image" (BeReshith 1:27), simultaneously with Chavvah, and is told, "fill the earth, and conquer it" (ibid. 1:28). He relates to "E-lokim," the name expressing G-d's universal relationship to the natural world. According to the second chapter, Adam is created from the dust of the earth, attains a community with Chavvah only after he is overwhelmed and sacrifices part of himself, and is charged with working and protecting his world. He relates to "Hashem," the "personal" name of G-d.

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For R. Soloveitchik, these differences underscore two aspects of the human personality:

Adam the First is bold and adventurous. Intrigued by the drama of the cosmos, he is entrusted with conquering and mastering nature. Humans are created together, "male and female" (ibid. 1:27), because nature requires a utilitarian social structure to realize its goals.

Adam the Second is awed by his encounter with Hashem. To find his place in the world, this Adam must submit to something greater than he, sharing instead of conquering. He sacrifices part of himself to gain Chavvah<sup>2</sup> and, with her, a community.

### Two Noachs

As we shall demonstrate, the Torah's two portraits of Noach reflect this same dichotomy. Read alone, each version seems complete. But the constant oscillation between them reveals man's complexity and his manifold ways of confronting G-d.

In the first depiction, the flood is a natural consequence of the violation of E-lokim's natural law. In the second, Hashem is saddened, so to speak, by man's wickedness and regrets creating him.<sup>3</sup> In the first, the only concern is preserving a male and female of each species in order to regenerate the world's population. In the second, man's relationship to Hashem must be reestablished by sacrifice, necessitating seven pairs of each species. The first evokes the language of the first chapter, including the command to be fruitful and multiply;<sup>4</sup> the second speaks of the "breath of life" of the second chapter.<sup>5</sup> The first ends with a universal code of justice, the second with a "personal" promise of G-d's loyalty.

Not surprisingly, we find two Noachs in the ark, two typologies, two representatives of mankind, each confronting the catastrophe from his own vantage point. Indeed, the Torah recounts the flood from both perspectives simultaneously, preserving the dialectic of human adventures. The presentation appears seamless, but closer examination reveals two versions, paralleling the two accounts of man's creation. In *parashath "Noach,"* though, the Torah jumps between versions, capturing the polar oscillation of human endeavor.

## 2. WHY THE FLOOD?

### Divine Regret and Sadness

The Torah explains G-d's reasons for destroying mankind:

*Hashem* saw  
 that man's wickedness on earth was great;  
 and every impulse of the thoughts of his heart  
 was only evil all the time.  
*Hashem* regretted  
 that He had made man on earth;  
 He was saddened unto His heart.  
*Hashem* said, "I will wipe off the face of the earth  
 the man whom I created —  
 from man to beast  
 to creeping things and birds of the sky;  
 for I have regretted that I have made them."  
 And Noach had found favor in *Hashem's* eyes.

(BeReshith 6:5-8)

This is the language of Adam the Second. *Hashem*, the "personal" G-d, responds out of the pain of shattered relationships, struggling, so to speak, with His covenant with mankind, "grieved" that man could not live up to his responsibilities, "regretful" of having chosen so unreliable a partner, yet allowing one individual to "find favor in His eyes."

### Cause and Effect

Having introduced the flood from the perspective of broken bonds, the Torah immediately retells the story with an emphasis on cosmic order:

The earth became corrupt before E-lokim;  
 the earth was filled with injustice.  
 E-lokim saw the earth,  
 and, behold, it was corrupt;  
 for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

(ibid. 6:11-12)

The consequence of such a situation is unavoidable; it's natural, just as pain inevitably follows a child's innocently touching a hot stove:

E-lokim said to Noach,  
 "The end of all flesh is come before Me,  
 for the earth has filled with lawlessness because of [people];  
 behold, I am destroying them with the earth."

(ibid. 6:13)

### 3. SURVIVAL VERSUS SALVATION

Next comes a to-the-point, pragmatic survival plan: An ark is to be built according to very specific dimensions, and a surviving community is to be established therein. Evoking His creation of Adam the First's world, E-lokim orders Noach to bring into the ark "... male and female. Of the birds according to their kind and of the beasts according to their kind, of every creeping thing according to its kind ..." (ibid. 6:19-20), all simply to repopulate the earth after the deluge. And "... according to all that E-lokim had commanded him, so [Noach] did" (ibid. 6:22).

The story is then repeated from a different angle:

Hashem said to Noach,  
 "Come, you and all your household, into the ark;  
 for you have I seen as righteous before me in this generation.  
 Of every clean beast you shall take seven pairs,  
 [each comprising] man and his wife;  
 and of the beast that is not clean, two,  
 man and his wife....

For in another seven days, I shall make it rain on the earth...."

(ibid. 7:1-4)

Hashem's perspective enriches the previous utilitarian charge with three "personal" notes:

First, Noach is saved not just to repeople the earth but because he has been righteous and loyal to man's covenant with G-d.<sup>6</sup>

Second, while a male and a female of each species will suffice to reestablish the animal kingdom, Noach requires more. His existence demands an appreciation of clean and unclean in order to offer the sacrifices crucial to Adam the Second's being. All the animals — clean and unclean — come to the ark, but only the pairs, the biological minimum, heed E-lokim's command:

Of the clean beast  
 and of the beast  
 that is not clean;

and of the birds  
and everything that creeps upon the earth.  
*Two by two* they came...,  
*male and female,*  
as *E-lokim* had commanded Noach.

(ibid. 7:8-9)

Third, Noach must wait seven days, not for purely practical reasons but — as Rashi informs us — because of the *shivah* for Methushelach.<sup>7</sup> For Noach is part of a covenantal community.

This section concludes, “Noach did according to all that *Hashem* had commanded him” (ibid. 7:5).

#### 4. THE START OF THE FLOOD

##### “The Second Month” and the First

These two perspectives also inform a dispute regarding the start of the flood “in the second month” (ibid. 7-11): “R. Eli’ezer says, ‘This is MarCheshvan.’ R. Yehoshua says, ‘This is Iyyar’ ” (*Rosh HaShanah* 11b).

MarCheshvan follows the first month of all time, Tishrei, the anniversary of the creation of the world.<sup>8</sup> For R. Eli’ezer, then, the flood is a natural outgrowth of Adam the First’s failure to obey *E-lokim*’s natural order.

Iyyar follows the first month of the Hebrew calendar, Nisan, the anniversary of the exodus from Mitzrayim, in which G-d affirmed His relationship with those loyal to His covenant. Therefore, for R. Yehoshua, the flood stems from a breach in Adam the Second’s service of *Hashem*.

#### 5. AFTER THE DELUGE

After the flood, *E-lokim* commands Noach and company to leave the ark and blesses them, echoing the directive issued to Adam the First:

*E-lokim* spoke to Noach, saying:  
“Go forth from the ark....  
Bring out with you every living thing  
of all flesh that is with you:  
birds, animals,  
and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth;  
they shall swarm the earth

and be fruitful and multiply on earth."  
(BeReshith 8:15-17)

Yet "Noach the Second" responds:

Noach built an altar to *Hashem*;  
he took of every clean animal and every clean bird,  
and he offered sacrifices on the altar.  
(ibid. 8:20)

## 6. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

### Constant Oscillation

Read separately, the two accounts of man's creation might each appear to present the whole picture. Only when viewed side by side does each emerge as incomplete and irreconcilable. For man's creativity, says R. Soloveitchik, flows from his constant oscillation between the two poles of his existence. Likewise, as noted earlier in this essay, each portrait of Noach may seem complete. But the constant oscillation between the two highlights man's complexity and his manifold confrontations with G-d:

#### "Noach the First"

#### "Noach the Second"

Hashem saw  
that man's wickedness on earth  
was great;  
and every impulse  
of the thoughts of his heart  
was only evil all the time.  
Hashem regretted  
that He had made man on earth;  
He was saddened unto His heart.  
Hashem said,  
"I will wipe off the face of the earth  
the man whom I created —  
from man to beast  
to creeping things  
and birds of the sky;  
for I have regretted  
that I have made them."  
And Noach had found favor  
in Hashem's eyes.

(BeReshith 6:5-8)

**"Noach the First"**

These are the generations of Noach:  
 Noach was a righteous man,  
 [and] perfect was he  
 in his generations;  
 Noach walked with E-lokim.  
 Noach begot three sons:  
 Shem, Cham, and Yefeth.  
 The earth became corrupt  
 before E-lokim;  
 the earth was filled with injustice.  
 E-lokim saw the earth,  
 and, behold, it was corrupt;  
 for all flesh had corrupted  
 its way on the earth.  
 E-lokim said to Noach,  
 "The end of all flesh  
 is come before Me,  
 for the earth has filled  
 with lawlessness  
 because of [people];  
 behold, I am destroying them  
 with the earth.  
 Make yourself an ark....  
 And you,  
 take for yourself  
 of every food that is eaten,  
 and gather [it] unto you;  
 it will be as food  
 for you and for them."  
 Noach did so;  
 according to all that  
 E-lokim had commanded him,  
 so he did.

(ibid. 6:9-14, 21-22)

**"Noach the Second"**

Hashem said to Noach,  
 "Come, you and all your household,  
 into the ark;  
 for you have I seen as righteous  
 before Me in this generation.  
 Of every clean beast  
 you shall take even pairs,  
 [each comprising] man and his wife;

**"Noach the First"**

And Noach was 600 years old;  
 and the flood came,  
 water upon the earth.  
 Noach and his sons, his wife,  
 and his sons' wives with him  
 came into the ark  
 because of the waters of the flood.  
 Of the clean beast  
 and of the beast  
 that is not clean....  
 They came to Noach, to the ark;  
 two by two of all flesh  
 in which there was the breath of life.  
 And those that came  
 were male and female,  
 of all flesh they came,  
 as E-lokim had commanded him....

(ibid. 7:6-8, 15-16)

All flesh that creeps on the earth  
 perished —  
 birds, cattle, beasts,  
 every swarming thing

**"Noach the Second"**

and of the beast that is not clean, two,  
 For in another seven days,  
 I shall make it rain on the earth....  
 forty days and forty nights;  
 I shall wipe off the face of the earth  
 all the existence that I created."  
 Noach did  
 according to all that Hashem had  
 commanded him.

(ibid. 7:1-5)

... and Hashem shut him in.  
 The flood was forty days on the earth;  
 the waters increased  
 and raised the ark,  
 and it rose above the earth.

(ibid. 7:16-17)



**"Noach the First"**

that swarms upon the earth,  
and all mankind.

(ibid. 7:21)

The waters swelled on the earth  
150 days.  
And E-lokim remembered Noach  
and all the animals and all the cattle  
that were with him in the ark;  
and E-lokim passed a wind  
over the earth  
and the waters subsided.  
And the waters  
continued to diminish  
until the tenth month;  
... on the first of the month,  
the mountaintops became visible.

(ibid. 7:24; 8:1, 5)

**"Noach the Second"**

Everything with the merest breath  
of life in its nostrils,  
all that was on the dry land,  
died.

He wiped out everything existing  
that was on the face of the earth,  
from man to cattle  
to creeping things  
to birds of the sky,  
they were wiped off the earth;  
only Noach remained  
and those with him in the ark.

(ibid. 7:22-23)

It came to pass  
at the end of forty days,  
Noach opened  
the window of the ark  
that he had made.

...

He waited still another seven days;  
and he sent forth the dove,  
and it did not continue returning

**“Noach the First”**

E-lokim spoke to Noach, saying:  
 “Go forth from the ark....  
 with you every living thing  
 of all flesh that is with you:  
 birds, animals,  
 and every creeping thing  
 that creeps on the earth;  
 they shall swarm the earth  
 and be fruitful and multiply  
 on earth.”  
 And Noach went forth  
 and his sons, his wife,  
 and his sons’ wives with him.  
 Every animal,  
 every creeping thing,  
 and every bird,  
 everything that creeps on the earth;  
 by families,  
 they went forth from the ark.

(ibid. 8:15-19)

**“Noach the Second”**

to him anymore.  
 It was in the 601st year,  
 in the first [month],  
 on the first of the month,  
 the waters dried up  
 from upon the earth;  
 Noach removed the ark covering,  
 and he saw, and, behold,  
 the surface of the ground was drying.  
 And in the second month,  
 on the twenty-seventh day  
 of the month,  
 the earth had dried.

(ibid. 8:6, 12-14)

Noach built an altar to Hashem;  
 he took of every clean animal  
 and of every clean bird,  
 and he offered sacrifices on the altar.  
 Hashem smelled the pleasant smell,  
 and Hashem said to His heart,

**"Noach the First"**

E-lokim blessed Noach  
and his sons;  
He said to them,  
"Be fruitful and multiply,  
and fill the earth.  
And the fear and dread of you  
shall be upon all the animals  
of the earth  
and upon all the birds of the sky....  
Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed;  
for in the image of E-lokim  
He created man."

...  
E-lokim said to Noach  
and his sons, saying,  
"Behold, I establish My covenant  
with you  
and with your seed after you.

...  
I will maintain My covenant  
with you,  
... and never again shall there be  
a flood to destroy the earth."

(ibid. 9:1-2, 6, 8, 11)

**"Noach the Second"**

"Never again will I curse the earth  
because of man,  
since the impulse of man's heart  
is evil from his youth;  
and never again will I smite  
every living thing,  
as I have done.  
All the days of the earth,  
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
summer and winter,  
and day and night  
shall not cease."

(ibid. 8:20-22)

## 7. TWO BLESSINGS

The flood narrative closes with two parallel blessings from G-d. Hashem blesses from *His* heart, so to speak, and speaks of *man's* heart. E-lokim, in contrast, delineates the utilitarian establishment of man's dominion on earth and his subjugation to a legal system that punishes killing with execution — a pragmatic requirement for any society. With this system, there will be no additional floods.

However, lest Noach the First neglect his parallel dimension, in repeating his blessing — “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ...” (ibid. 1:28) — G-d omits the phrase “and conquer it.”

Furthermore, Adam the First, who understands and manipulates nature, sees the physics of refracted rays in the rainbow. Therefore, E-lokim exhorts “Noach the First” to see past science to the covenantal community in which he lives:

“I have set My bow in the cloud;  
and it shall be a covenantal sign  
between Me and the earth.”

...

E-lokim said to Noach:

“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established  
between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

(ibid. 9:13-17)

## NOTES

1. This landmark essay appeared in *Tradition*, 7 (summer 1965), 5-67.
2. See BeReshith 2:21-22.
3. *Ed. note:* The name “E-lokim,” from “E-l” (meaning “all-powerful”), is associated with divine justice, and the name “Hashem” with divine mercy. (See Rashi on BeReshith 1:1.) Thus, for R. Soloveitchik, “E-lokim” relates to cosmic order, and “Hashem” to the individual. Significantly, only “E-lokim” is mentioned in the Torah’s account of the six days of Creation.
4. See BeReshith 1:28.
5. See ibid. 2:7.
6. See ibid. 6:8.
7. See Rashi on BeReshith 7:4.
8. *Ed. note:* See *Rosh HaShanah* 10b-11a, where R. Yehoshua disputes this point as well, arguing that the world was created in Nisan. Also see Tosafoth on ibid. 27a, ד״ה כמאן מצליק, where R. Tam suggests that, according to everyone, the world was created in Nisan; the debate concerns only G-d’s “thought”

of Creation, which R. Eli'ezer places in Tishrei, half a year before the world came into being. Similarly, Chazal account for the conflicting use of both singular and plural pronouns in the creation of man (see BeReshith 1:27) by stating that G-d initially "thought" to create male and female separately but ultimately created them as one being. (See *Kethubboth* 8a and *Eruvin* 18a.) The nature of divine thought versus divine action is beyond the scope of this note.

It should be noted that the creation of the "world" here refers to the creation of man, with the world having been formed five days earlier. See *Pes. DeR. Kahana* 23 (150a) and *Ran on Rosh HaShanah* 16a.