

Parshat Noah: A Conversation Between Two Yehudas

צְדָקָתְךָ **Your righteousness**
כְּהַרְרֵי אֵל **Is like the mighty mountains**
מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ **Your justice**
תְּהוֹם רַבָּה **Like the great deep (Psalm 36:7)**

The terrain of Psalm 36:7 reminded the 4th century sage, Rabbi Yehuda, of the Noah story. He noticed that “the great deep” of the Psalm is the exact description of rising flood waters of the Noah’s flood. As “the deep” became the flood, the mountain heights became the peaks of Arrarat where the Ark finally came to rest. For Rabbi Yehuda, it was clear: The heights save and the deep destroys. A 20th century Yehuda, the Hebrew poet Yehuda Amichai, disagrees. Life is not so straightforward. The heights do not always rescue, nor do the depths always destroy.

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה Rabbi Yehuda
בֶּן רַבִּי סִימֹן Son of Rabbi Simon
פָּתַר קְרִיאָה Interpreted this verse
בְּנַח Referring to Noah:
אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא Said the Blessed Holy One
צְדָקָה שְׁעַשִּׂיתִי Righteousness that I did
עִם נֹחַ בַּתֵּבָה With Noah in the ark
לֹא עָשִׂיתִי I did not do
עִמוּ אֶלָּא עִלַּי With him except on
הַרְרֵי אֵל **The mighty mountains**
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר As it says
”וַיִּתְנַחַח הַתֵּבָה... עַל” “And the ark rested...on
הַרֵי אַרְרָט” The mountains of Arrarat.”*
מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ **Your justice**
תְּהוֹם רַבָּה **like the great deep:**
יְסוּרִין Afflictions
שֶׁהֵבֵאתִי That I brought
עַל דּוֹרוֹ On his generation
לֹא הֵבֵאתִי I did not bring
עֲלֵיהֶן אֶלָּא On them except
מִתְּהוֹם רַבָּה From the great deep
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר As it says
”בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה” “On that day
נִבְקְעוּ כָּל מַעֲיִנוֹת Were split all the springs
תְּהוֹם רַבָּה”** Of the great deep”**

(Genesis Rabbah 33:1)

*Genesis 8:4 **Genesis 7:11

הָעוֹלָם מְלֵא זְכוֹרָה וְשִׁכְחָה
כְּמוֹ יָם וַיִּבְשָׁה. לְפַעֲמִים הַזְּכוֹרוֹן
הוּא הַיִּבְשָׁה הַמוֹצֵקֶת וְהַקִּיָּמָת
וְלְפַעֲמִים הַזְּכוֹרוֹן הוּא הַיָּם שֶׁמְכַסֶּה הַכֹּל
כְּמוֹ בַּמַּבּוּל וְהַשִּׁכְחָה הִיא יִבְשָׁה מְצִילָה כְּמוֹ אֶרְרָט.

The world is filled with remembering and forgetting
As it is with sea and dry land. Sometimes memory
Is the dry land that is firm and founded
And sometimes memory is the sea that covers everything
Like in the flood. And it is forgetting that is the dry land like Arrarat.

Yehuda Amichai *from* Patuah, Sagur, Patuah
Translated by Rabbi Steven G. Sager