

# Flood Myths in the Individual Psyche

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that there are hundreds of flood myths in almost all cultures of the world. These myths speak of the relationship between gods and people and almost always carry great cultural and collective meanings. But the human psyche is also a cosmos of its own, and this allows for the possibility of looking at flood myths intra-psychically, to explore what happens inside an individual psyche with the manifestation of a flood myth.

The illustration to the right is of a flood myth that is much older than Christianity by some 2,000 years in the Epic of Gilgamesh. We will be examining the myth of Noah as described in the Bible in Genesis 6, 7 and 8, as an example of this intra-psychic perspective. This is not the oldest of the flood myths, but it is one of the best-known flood myths in the western world.



*Figure 1: Gilgamesh*

## GODS AND THE SELF

Since we are speaking about gods and humans, we need to be clear on what we are talking about. The idea of God or a god in myth loosely corresponds to what Jung referred to when he spoke about the Self (Jung, 1969 b). The Self is the organizing centre of the psyche. It sees wider than the ego, and therefore has an omniscient feel about it. Following this idea, it is easy to see why the idea of gods often serves as a projection of Self. We do, however, need to be careful when we speak of God as a projection of Self. The first thing to emphasize is that in Analytical Psychology we can only talk of the God-IMAGE, the way that God is experienced by the human psyche (Jung 1970).

The idea of Self is a concept which is a much wider concept than an individual god. For example, there is the relationship between good and evil. Jung described how both these aspects (good and evil) belonged to the Self, (Jung 1970) together with other aspects as well. A Christian idea of God, for example, seems to split these two aspects apart and contains the good in the idea of God, and evil in the idea of Satan. Polytheistic religions have different gods and goddesses carrying these aspects of the Self, so that not they are not all contained within one god, as they might be in monotheistic religions.

The writings of Jung seem to follow the narrative that God is going through a transformation process of becoming aware of the evil within Himself, of becoming conscious of his own shadow. This line can be followed through from the garden of Eden myth through to Job, a topic of special interest for Jung, and then right through to the eventual crucifixion, an act of self-sacrifice, which was, according to Jung, necessitated by the new self-awareness of God. (Jung, 1970)

This paper follows the idea that the flood myth about Noah is one step in this process of God becoming aware of Himself. Intra-psychically we can say it is the process of the Self developing, differentiating or becoming aware of itself.

## HUMANS AND THE EGO

We will now briefly look at the relationship between ego and Self. When we look at a myth as an intrapsychic process, the human protagonist is often a symbol; of ego. Just as the gods created humans in myths, in an intrapsychic interpretation, the ego is a product of the Self. There is a process of how this develops, described by Edinger (1960). He looks at the development that takes place through three stages where the ego becomes progressively less identified with the Self, allowing it to find its place in relation to it.

1. At first the ego is identified with the Self, believing itself to be part of it. For babies the Self gets projected onto parents, especially the mother. The baby experiences itself as one with the mother. (Fig a)
2. Gradually a part of the ego starts experiencing itself as not-the-mother, and a part of the ego starts to differentiate out from the mother (Fig b).
3. This eventually develops into a healthy relationship between the ego and Self. (Fig c)
4. It is important to realise that both these entities need each other: ego needs Self as much as Self needs ego.



Fig (a)



Fig (b)

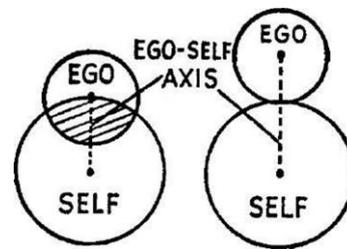


Fig (c)

## THE FLOOD MYTH OF NOAH

We will now look at the flood myth about Noah, staying close to the text and following the St James translation.

### INFLATION AND RETRIBUTION

#### GENESIS: CHAPTER 6

<sup>1</sup> AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN MEN BEGAN TO MULTIPLY ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH, AND DAUGHTERS WERE BORN UNTO THEM,

<sup>2</sup> THAT THE SONS OF GOD SAW THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN THAT THEY WERE FAIR; AND THEY TOOK THEM WIVES OF ALL WHICH THEY CHOSE.

<sup>3</sup> AND THE LORD SAID, MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH MAN, FOR THAT HE ALSO IS FLESH: YET HIS DAYS SHALL BE AN HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS.

<sup>4</sup> THERE WERE GIANTS IN THE EARTH IN THOSE DAYS; AND ALSO AFTER THAT, WHEN THE SONS OF GOD CAME IN UNTO THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN, AND THEY BARE CHILDREN TO THEM, THE SAME BECAME MIGHTY MEN WHICH WERE OF OLD, MEN OF RENOWN.

This is a surprising start of our myth, but it can provide a very important context for the appearance of a Flood. In the Text it says that the sons of God found the daughters of earth fair and had children with them. The offspring gave birth to the Giants, also known as the Nephilim.

Since we are psychologists, we can step around the controversial theological questions around this issue. We can say that the 'sons of god' could refer to spiritual elements, elements which originated in the Self. These elements were attracted to the instinctual elements, 'the daughters of earth'. One result of this would have been delusions of immortality because of an over-identification with the spiritual and an unconsciousness of the instinctual/animalistic nature of human beings. This could be the underlying reason for the verse in the text clearly stating *that human lifespans are limited to 120 years*. Further, the offspring of these unions produced abominations, the giants. Symbolically Giants are forceful beings. They are also carriers of old, archaic primitive energy. (Chetwynd, 1982). They represented the neglected, earthy, material side of the unconscious, including extravert sexuality.

A possible interpretation here is that the story of the sons of god marrying the daughters from the earth could be an example of an enmeshment between different realms. In the psyche of a modern individual person this could describe a lack of differentiation between ego and Self, requiring some remedial action in order to restore a proper ego-Self Axis.



Figure 2: *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* : Hieronymus Bosch 1510

We continue with the text:

- 5  
AND GOD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT IN THE EARTH, AND THAT EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.
- 6  
AND IT REPENTED THE LORD THAT HE HAD MADE MAN ON THE EARTH, AND IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART.
- 7  
AND THE LORD SAID, I WILL DESTROY MAN WHOM I HAVE CREATED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH; BOTH MAN, AND BEAST, AND THE CREEPING THING, AND THE FOWLS OF THE AIR; FOR IT REPENTETH ME THAT I HAVE MADE THEM.

This is the Self making a judgement, finding this aspect of the psyche unacceptable. Clinically, this judgement of the Self against the other parts of the psyche has not reached consciousness yet: the individual is happily carrying on with whatever he or she was busy with, blissfully unaware of what this looks like from the outside.

I want to highlight three reasons on why this process occurs:

- (1) *Sometimes the ego is out of control and judgement by the Self is a corrective measure.*

One of the functions of the Self is that of an ordering principle: it shows awareness of the bigger picture. When there is not a good connection with the Self, there is an absence of reflection on how we are behaving and how it is looking from the outside. One of the ways we observe this is when

there is a sense of inflation and self-importance, a sense of being “larger than life”, a giant so to speak. There is a perception of immortality, where there are no consequences to anything we do or say.

This lack of control by the ego normally happens when our strategies for living our lives are beginning to fail. The Self is often the part which shows us this. I am thinking of a few examples: personality disorders, specifically narcissism; affective disorders, such as Mania or Puer/Puella Aeternis patterns.

The judgement taking place is of course unconscious, the ego of the individual is often not aware of this judgement by the Self. Of course, the people around the individual know exactly what is going on, they LIVE the impact of the person’s behaviour. The individual has lost a proper relationship with the Self, which could have given it a perspective on its behaviour. The result is that the people surrounding the individual carry this perspective FOR him or her.

Those of us who are therapists know this better than anyone else. We feel, sometimes in the countertransference, the revulsion and disgust at the acting out of the ego of the afflicted individual. That is often the projective identification we have with the part of the Self of the patient which is disgusted with the ego. It is often difficult to hold the feelings brought up by this projective identification while also staying aware of the other dimensions of the patient.

*(2) Sometimes behaviour is acceptable, but the Self judges that we are on the wrong path of life.*

We have all seen patients who were following a certain path in life, and suddenly found themselves blocked. I am reminded of a young woman I once saw in therapy. She qualified as a lawyer, and was on her way towards becoming a senior associate in a law firm. Suddenly she felt this judgement coming over her, telling her that what she was doing was wrong in some way. Or, I also remember the middle-aged man who had lived in an overseas country for more than two decades and one day just got up and realized that his life there was wrong in some way. Or I remember the many people in relationships who one day realized that the relationships were wrong for them.

In all these examples, the people were living good solid lives, but the Self felt those lives to be inauthentic, false, not true to the integrity of the person itself. The Self pointed this out to them and then they had to start facing these choices they had made.

*(3) Sometimes the Self calls us to a new life.*

For many of the people from the examples I talked about above, the Self was calling them to a new way of life. But to reach this new life the old life had to be destroyed first. Whether it is career or the place where you live or the relationship you are in, if the Self imagines that this is not right for you, it has to destroy the parts of you which are preventing you from becoming yourself first.

One specific way in which this happens in the Black cultures of SA is called Ukuthwasa. There is a calling from the ancestors for a particular individual to become a traditional healer. When that call is not heeded, the person suffers terribly in life, because everything starts feeling wrong.

## **PRESERVATION OF LIFE: A SAFE VESSEL**

We return to our text:

<sup>8</sup> BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD.

<sup>9</sup> THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH: NOAH WAS A JUST MAN AND PERFECT IN HIS GENERATIONS, AND NOAH WALKED WITH GOD.

- 10 AND NOAH BEGAT THREE SONS, SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH.
- 11 THE EARTH ALSO WAS CORRUPT BEFORE GOD, AND THE EARTH WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE.
- 12 AND GOD LOOKED UPON THE EARTH, AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS CORRUPT; FOR ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED HIS WAY UPON THE EARTH.
- 13 AND GOD SAID UNTO NOAH, THE END OF ALL FLESH IS COME BEFORE ME; FOR THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE THROUGH THEM; AND, BEHOLD, I WILL DESTROY THEM WITH THE EARTH.

All is not lost- the Self recognizes that there are parts of the psyche and parts of the ego which are just, which are in touch with the Self, which walk with the Self. Those parts will be saved. Noah is seen as a just man who walked with God. In terms of the individual psyche this phrase is speaking about that part of the psyche which is balanced and aware and in contact with the larger picture, the Self.

Verse 11, 'the earth was filled with violence' is important. Violence is almost always used as a means to power. It shows the extent to which people are attempting to control each other. Intra-psychically this could refer to attempts to overpower the rest of the psyche by power. This could be self-disparaging behaviour or compulsive attempts at controlling aspects of the ego not perceived to be in line with the objectives of the ego.

The section, Verse 12 to 13, speaks about Flesh being corrupted and in need of being destroyed. Flesh is the incarnation of spirit, it is a concretization of the spirit. But flesh can also be instincts. Intrapsychically this might refer to those shadow urges which lie deep on the chthonic level of our psyches.

Our instincts and our spirituality are always intertwined. In the end it is in the flesh where we feel our psychic disturbances. The lack of energy or appetite or libido or ability to relax and sleep. Almost all psychic disturbances play themselves out in the flesh.

Back to the text:

- 14 MAKE THEE AN ARK OF GOPHER WOOD; ROOMS SHALT THOU MAKE IN THE ARK, AND SHALT PITCH IT WITHIN AND WITHOUT WITH PITCH.
- 15 AND THIS IS THE FASHION WHICH THOU SHALT MAKE IT OF: THE LENGTH OF THE ARK SHALL BE THREE HUNDRED CUBITS, THE BREADTH OF IT FIFTY CUBITS, AND THE HEIGHT OF IT THIRTY CUBITS.
- 16 A WINDOW SHALT THOU MAKE TO THE ARK, AND IN A CUBIT SHALT THOU FINISH IT ABOVE; AND THE DOOR OF THE ARK SHALT THOU SET IN THE SIDE THEREOF; WITH LOWER, SECOND, AND THIRD STORIES SHALT THOU MAKE IT.



Figure 3: Building the Ark: Schedel, 1493

- 17 AND, BEHOLD, I, EVEN I, DO BRING A FLOOD OF WATERS UPON THE EARTH, TO DESTROY ALL FLESH, WHEREIN IS THE BREATH OF LIFE, FROM UNDER HEAVEN; AND EVERY THING THAT IS IN THE EARTH SHALL DIE.

18

BUT WITH THEE WILL I ESTABLISH MY COVENANT; AND THOU SHALT COME INTO THE ARK, THOU, AND THY SONS, AND THY WIFE, AND THY SONS' WIVES WITH THEE.

“Build an ark.” That is the commandment from the Self. One needs to create a safe container, which will weather the storms and allow yourself to survive. What does an ark do? In my mind at least three things: it provides shelter from the storms, it contains the life held inside it and it floats on the water.

It is a function of the psyche to create these types of structures. It is a natural part of being human, and it happens spontaneously. In times of trauma, such as assault, one goes there automatically. Donald Kalsched has described in detail how it is a natural function of a traumatised psyche to build a safe container for a part of the psyche and then to split off this part from the rest of consciousness, in order to keep it safe. The function of analysis is to understand why and how the defensive structure of the individual was built. (Kalsched, 1996).

What does this look like in practical terms? Routines or habits are an important shelter as well as a container against coming storms. They are structures which will keep us safe when the storm comes. Of course, we have to work on it when the storm is not there yet. Keep going to therapy even if nothing appears to happen. Go to work every day, take your medication, keep your exercise regime up, stick to your yoga routines or meditation practices. Maintain your habits. I am reminded of the routine Jung built for himself around 1912 to 1913, when he went through his own psychic crisis following his separation from Freud.

Essential is also the letting go of control. An ark cannot be steered, it cannot be anchored. It can only float. It will allow itself to be taken where it must go, and one will have to go with it. This is the inevitable lesson the ego must learn: the ego has very little control. This reminds one of the night-sea journey (Jung, 1954) an archetypal experience of loss of control by the ego by being swallowed by a fish or big animal and an immersion into the unconscious.

To continue with our text:

19

AND OF EVERY LIVING THING OF ALL FLESH, TWO OF EVERY SORT SHALT THOU BRING INTO THE ARK, TO KEEP THEM ALIVE WITH THEE; THEY SHALL BE MALE AND FEMALE.

20

OF FOWLS AFTER THEIR KIND, AND OF CATTLE AFTER THEIR KIND, OF EVERY CREEPING THING OF THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND, TWO OF EVERY SORT SHALL COME UNTO THEE, TO KEEP THEM ALIVE.

21

AND TAKE THOU UNTO THEE OF ALL FOOD THAT IS EATEN, AND THOU SHALT GATHER IT TO THEE; AND IT SHALL BE FOR FOOD FOR THEE, AND FOR THEM.

22

THUS DID NOAH; ACCORDING TO ALL THAT GOD COMMANDED HIM, SO DID HE.

## CHAPTER 7

13

IN THE SELFSAME DAY ENTERED NOAH, AND SHEM, AND HAM, AND JAPHETH, THE SONS OF NOAH, AND NOAH'S WIFE, AND THE THREE WIVES OF HIS SONS WITH THEM, INTO THE ARK;

14

THEY, AND EVERY BEAST AFTER HIS KIND, AND ALL THE CATTLE AFTER THEIR KIND, AND EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND, AND EVERY FOWL AFTER HIS KIND, EVERY BIRD OF EVERY SORT.

15

AND THEY WENT IN UNTO NOAH INTO THE ARK, TWO AND TWO OF ALL FLESH, WHEREIN IS THE BREATH OF LIFE.

16

AND THEY THAT WENT IN, WENT IN MALE AND FEMALE OF ALL FLESH, AS GOD HAD COMMANDED HIM: AND THE LORD SHUT HIM IN.



Figure 4: Noah's Ark by Edward Hicks, 1846

Even though everything on the earth needs to be destroyed, because it is corrupt, life needs to go on. Noah and his sons and their wives get to survive, together with two each of every animal. Noah became the guardian of future fertility and growth, he became the guardian of life on earth after the episode of the flood. In the personal Great Flood events in our lives, we have to protect the fertility principle. This is so that life can go on after our personal flood event. Psychologically speaking this is about the ability to keep being creative and providing new aspects of the earth. Fertility is about reproduction, but it is also about potential.

The symbols of the pairs, both humans and animals, speaks of *coniunctio*, of wholeness or completeness. What needs to be preserved is wholeness, because only out of this wholeness will life survive after the flood.

## **DESTRUCTION OF LIFE**

17

AND THE FLOOD WAS FORTY DAYS UPON THE EARTH; AND THE WATERS INCREASED, AND BARE UP THE ARK, AND IT WAS LIFT UP ABOVE THE EARTH.

19

AND THE WATERS PREVAILED EXCEEDINGLY UPON THE EARTH; AND ALL THE HIGH HILLS, THAT WERE UNDER THE WHOLE HEAVEN, WERE COVERED.

21

AND ALL FLESH DIED THAT MOVED UPON THE EARTH, BOTH OF FOWL, AND OF CATTLE, AND OF BEAST, AND OF EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH, AND EVERY MAN:

22

ALL IN WHOSE NOSTRILS WAS THE BREATH OF LIFE, OF ALL THAT WAS IN THE DRY LAND, DIED.

23

AND EVERY LIVING SUBSTANCE WAS DESTROYED WHICH WAS UPON THE FACE OF THE GROUND, BOTH MAN, AND CATTLE, AND THE CREEPING THINGS, AND THE FOWL OF THE HEAVEN; AND THEY WERE DESTROYED FROM THE EARTH: AND NOAH ONLY REMAINED ALIVE, AND THEY THAT WERE WITH HIM IN THE ARK.

24

AND THE WATERS PREVAILED UPON THE EARTH AN HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS.

In the intrapsychic interpretation of the myth, this is the destruction of everything inside of the psyche which is not contained in the ark. In terms of Alchemical imagery this is the Nigredo, the blackness.

Symbolically, water can be seen as many things, but in general it can be seen as Psychic Energy, energy rushing up from the psyche and flooding it, destroying large parts of it. Water is also a symbol often associated with rebirth. The Flood myth is essentially a rebirth myth.

Generally speaking the dreams of people in this stage are symbols of global disasters, or post-apocalyptic imagery. The content of thoughts is generally nihilistic and devaluing of both self and the world.



Figure 5: *The Great Flood: Danby, 1840*

Clinically, the experience of someone whose psyche is flooded often looks like depression. Although depression is experienced as a lack of energy, this lack of energy is often a result of being overwhelmed by energy. We all know how it feels being so overwhelmed by things that you cannot move, or having your head so full of things that you cannot sleep, or being so filled with self-loathing that you cannot think straight.

In the context of this article, this depression is a force inside of us, destroying everything that we have around us or who we are. It is a type of self-destruction, it is something we are doing to ourselves, in order to get rid of the corruption of our psyches.

In deep depression nothing matters any more. This is the experience of “rock bottom”. This is the place where we have lost everything and have nothing left to lose. And having nothing left to lose is the state which allows the new to emerge.

In extreme forms of an inrush of psychic energy, we lose touch with reality to such an extent that we experience a loss of groundedness and can even hallucinate and suffer from delusions. This is an extreme form of what we are talking about, but it has the effect of “destroying” how we used to think about our world. In some instances, this is the only way to effectively destroy the corrupted world, especially if one’s formative years were extremely toxic and destructive.

## TURNING POINT

### CHAPTER 8

<sup>1</sup>

AND GOD REMEMBERED NOAH, AND EVERY LIVING THING, AND ALL THE CATTLE THAT WAS WITH HIM IN THE ARK. AND GOD MADE A WIND TO PASS OVER THE EARTH, AND THE WATERS ASSWAGED;

<sup>2</sup>

THE FOUNTAINS ALSO OF THE DEEP AND THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN WERE STOPPED, AND THE RAIN FROM HEAVEN WAS RESTRAINED;

<sup>3</sup> AND THE WATERS RETURNED FROM OFF THE EARTH CONTINUALLY: AND AFTER THE END OF THE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS THE WATERS WERE ABATED.

<sup>4</sup> AND THE ARK RESTED IN THE SEVENTH MONTH, ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF ARARAT.

<sup>5</sup> AND THE WATERS DECREASED CONTINUALLY UNTIL THE TENTH MONTH: IN THE TENTH MONTH, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH, WERE THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAINS SEEN.

I find this an extraordinary first verse: GOD REMEMBERED NOAH AND EVERY LIVING THING. It is as if God was for a while so blinded by rage and violence that He forgot them. In terms of the idea of Self, this gives us a picture of the Self as an energy which also sometimes loses its way and becomes overwhelmed by its own agenda. I am once again remembering Kalsched's idea of what he calls the *Self-care system* (Kalsched, 1996). This speaks about a Self which becomes misguided in terms of its attempts to protect the vulnerable split of parts of the psyche and loses perspective and objectivity on what is going on around it. In fairy tales this is described by images of the King being ill, mad or dying.

It is descriptions such as these which destroy our idea of the Self as an all loving benevolent Santa Claus- type figure which only has our good at heart and only seeks what is best for us. We need always to be mindful of the destructive, vengeful and even evil aspects of the Self.

This points to the idea that the work we do on ourselves is sometimes also about standing against a blind and one-sided Self. In Jung's work on Job, he comes to the conclusion that the whole episode with Job exposed exactly this aspect of God and forced Him to become more conscious of Himself (Jung, 1970).

And so the storm passes, the water starts going down. Inside of the psyche the individual starts feeling a little bit better. To continue with our text:

<sup>6</sup> AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THE END OF FORTY DAYS, THAT NOAH OPENED THE WINDOW OF THE ARK WHICH HE HAD MADE:

<sup>7</sup> AND HE SENT FORTH A RAVEN, WHICH WENT FORTH TO AND FRO, UNTIL THE WATERS WERE DRIED UP FROM OFF THE EARTH.

<sup>8</sup> ALSO HE SENT FORTH A DOVE FROM HIM, TO SEE IF THE WATERS WERE ABATED FROM OFF THE FACE OF THE GROUND;

<sup>9</sup> BUT THE DOVE FOUND NO REST FOR THE SOLE OF HER FOOT, AND SHE RETURNED UNTO HIM INTO THE ARK, FOR THE WATERS WERE ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH: THEN HE PUT FORTH HIS HAND, AND TOOK HER, AND PULLED HER IN UNTO HIM INTO THE ARK.

<sup>10</sup> AND HE STAYED YET OTHER SEVEN DAYS; AND AGAIN HE SENT FORTH THE DOVE OUT OF THE ARK;

<sup>11</sup> AND THE DOVE CAME IN TO HIM IN THE EVENING; AND, LO, IN HER MOUTH WAS AN OLIVE LEAF PLUCKT OFF: SO NOAH KNEW THAT THE WATERS WERE ABATED FROM OFF THE EARTH.

<sup>12</sup> AND HE STAYED YET OTHER SEVEN DAYS; AND SENT FORTH THE DOVE; WHICH RETURNED NOT AGAIN UNTO HIM ANY MORE.



Figure 6: Noah sends Raven and Dove: Mosaic St Marks Basilica, Venice

Noah first sent out a raven. Ravens are often seen as messengers of death with connections to the occult. They are to an extent messengers from "the other side". In our text the raven did not come

back, but kept circling the earth until the water subsided. This could be an aspect of the intuitive function. Note that the raven is a symbol reminding mankind of his mortality. This provides a contrast with the very beginning of our myth where the Nephilim were unaware of their own mortality. I am reminded of the ravens as they appear all over the latter stages of the *Philosophorum Rosarium* which Jung interprets as the emergence of psychic life after death (Jung, 1954).

Noah then sent out a dove, which just came back, then came with a leaf and then did not come back at all. Doves are universal symbols of peace. Peace can be described as the reconciliation of opposing energies. It is therefore a symbol integration

In terms of psychic process, these are attempts from the preserved part of the psyche to make contact with the rest of oneself. It is the beginning of re-integration of the preserved part of the psyche with the rest of it and the world. As therapists, these are the minute little signs for life we are looking for in a patient who is going through a Flood experience. These are the little leaves which show us that the water is going down. The material is sometimes a small dream fragment, sometimes a sign from daily life, a little thing they said or did which reveals something of contact with the person's soul.

## LEAVING THE SAFE VESSEL AND SACRIFICE

Back to our text:

- 15 AND GOD SPAKE UNTO NOAH, SAYING,  
16 GO FORTH OF THE ARK, THOU, AND THY WIFE, AND THY SONS, AND THY SONS' WIVES WITH THEE.  
17 BRING FORTH WITH THEE EVERY LIVING THING THAT IS WITH THEE, OF ALL FLESH, BOTH OF FOWL, AND OF CATTLE, AND OF EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH; THAT THEY MAY BREED ABUNDANTLY IN THE EARTH, AND BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY UPON THE EARTH.  
18 AND NOAH WENT FORTH, AND HIS SONS, AND HIS WIFE, AND HIS SONS' WIVES WITH HIM:  
19 EVERY BEAST, EVERY CREEPING THING, AND EVERY FOWL, AND WHATSOEVER CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH, AFTER THEIR KINDS, WENT FORTH OUT OF THE ARK.

This is the end of the ordeal, the Ark is grounded, the water is gone, and everyone leaves the Ark. Psychologically, this is when one can start feeling the ground under your feet again. This is the moment when you realise that you have survived.

To continue with our text:

- 20 AND NOAH BUILDED AN ALTAR UNTO THE LORD; AND TOOK OF EVERY CLEAN BEAST, AND OF EVERY CLEAN FOWL, AND OFFERED BURNT OFFERINGS ON THE ALTAR.  
21 AND THE LORD SMELLED A SWEET SAVOUR; AND THE LORD SAID IN HIS HEART, I WILL NOT AGAIN CURSE THE GROUND ANY MORE FOR MAN'S SAKE; FOR THE IMAGINATION OF MAN'S HEART IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH; NEITHER WILL I AGAIN SMITE ANY MORE EVERY THING LIVING, AS I HAVE DONE.  
22 WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEEDTIME AND HARVEST, AND COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE.

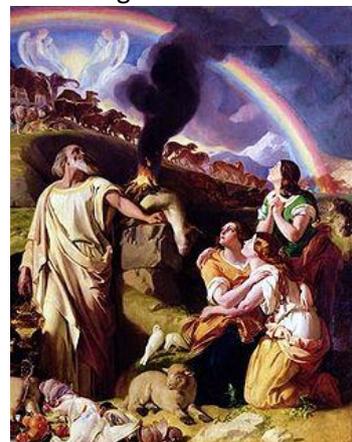


Figure 7: Noah's Sacrifice: From the Sistine Chapel

The sacrifice is the Ego bowing down to the Self, it is the ego admitting that it is not omnipotent, that there is something higher than it. The sacrifice itself is also a killing, but it is a killing done as an act of submission to the ultimate and controlling part of the psyche, the Self.

Once this sacrifice is made and the submission to the Self is complete, reconciliation between the Self and the rest of the Psyche can occur. It ends with the Self vowing never again to be this destructive. This is once again an example of the Self transforming, becoming aware of itself and its tremendous destructive potential.

Psychologically, the act of sacrifice is incredibly important. It happens all the time. We actually do it every day in one way or another. It is us giving up things, for the sake of the bigger picture. On a banal level it is about not having that extra piece of pie because it is not good for the whole. Or working late while you are tired, because it serves the bigger whole. Or sacrificing your time to go and watch your children playing sport. Or doing something for your life partner. Because it is serving the bigger picture. It is serving the Self.

The story continues in our text:

## RECEIVING THE BLESSINGS

### CHAPTER 9

<sup>1</sup>

AND GOD BLESSED NOAH AND HIS SONS, AND SAID UNTO THEM, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, AND REPLENISH THE EARTH.

<sup>2</sup>

AND THE FEAR OF YOU AND THE DREAD OF YOU SHALL BE UPON EVERY BEAST OF THE EARTH, AND UPON EVERY FOWL OF THE AIR, UPON ALL THAT MOVETH UPON THE EARTH, AND UPON ALL THE FISHES OF THE SEA; INTO YOUR HAND ARE THEY DELIVERED.

<sup>3</sup>

EVERY MOVING THING THAT LIVETH SHALL BE MEAT FOR YOU; EVEN AS THE GREEN HERB HAVE I GIVEN YOU ALL THINGS.

In these verses, fertility is established and even demanded. The superiority of man above all the earth is also established, with God giving man authority over all things, even giving Man the authority to consume the animals. In a symbolic sense, this is the Self elevating that surviving part above all other parts of Self. This is the true purpose of transformation. After having shredded the corrupt parts of the Self, the surviving kernel is given a position of control. The remaining part which was distilled through the process is in charge now.

This authority is a direct result of the ego's submission to the Self, through the act of sacrifice. And that is the story of REAL power- we only have authority when it has been sanctioned by the Self.

Our text:

<sup>4</sup>

BUT FLESH WITH THE LIFE THEREOF, WHICH IS THE BLOOD THEREOF, SHALL YE NOT EAT.

<sup>5</sup>

AND SURELY YOUR BLOOD OF YOUR LIVES WILL I REQUIRE; AT THE HAND OF EVERY BEAST WILL I REQUIRE IT, AND AT THE HAND OF MAN; AT THE HAND OF EVERY MAN'S BROTHER WILL I REQUIRE THE LIFE OF MAN.

<sup>6</sup> WHO SO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED: FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE MAN.

<sup>7</sup> AND YOU, BE YE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY; BRING FORTH ABUNDANTLY IN THE EARTH, AND MULTIPLY THEREIN.

In these verses, the sacredness of life is re-affirmed. After the tremendous destruction of life.

There is a bit of irony here. After the biggest mass destruction of human life probably in history, God now declares human life sacred. Psychoanalytically speaking I suspect one could say God was projecting a tiny bit here... On another level, of course, this is an important affirmation of life after the tremendous destruction of life has occurred. A re-calibration has to take place: life has to be valued again.

When we come out of a Flood experience, it is essential that we get out of the destructive mode and start valuing things again. When we have been in a deep depression where we thought about dying constantly, we have to reach a point of valuing the fact that we are alive again. Life is sacred, and we need to be reminded of that.

In our text:

<sup>8</sup> AND GOD SPAKE UNTO NOAH, AND TO HIS SONS WITH HIM, SAYING,

<sup>9</sup> AND I, BEHOLD, I ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH YOU, AND WITH YOUR SEED AFTER YOU;

<sup>11</sup> AND I WILL ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH YOU; NEITHER SHALL ALL FLESH BE CUT OFF ANY MORE BY THE WATERS OF A FLOOD; NEITHER SHALL THERE ANY MORE BE A FLOOD TO DESTROY THE EARTH.

<sup>13</sup> I DO SET MY BOW IN THE CLOUD, AND IT SHALL BE FOR A TOKEN OF A COVENANT BETWEEN ME AND THE EARTH.

<sup>14</sup> AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD:

<sup>15</sup> AND I WILL REMEMBER MY COVENANT, WHICH IS BETWEEN ME AND YOU AND EVERY LIVING CREATURE OF ALL FLESH; AND THE WATERS SHALL NO MORE BECOME A FLOOD TO DESTROY ALL .

<sup>16</sup> AND THE BOW SHALL BE IN THE CLOUD; AND I WILL LOOK UPON IT, THAT I MAY REMEMBER THE EVERLASTING COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND EVERY LIVING CREATURE OF ALL FLESH THAT IS UPON THE EARTH.

This is a clear moment of God becoming conscious of Himself. This is God setting up a reminder for Himself to not destroy the earth again. In terms of the psyche, this is the Self, becoming aware of its destructive power. And the symbol that will prevent further destruction is a rainbow.

Rabbinic Judaism saw the rainbow as a symbol of patience, a mechanism to control anger. The rainbow is a symbol of hope and optimism. It is also a symbol of unity, as it is made up of all the visible colours.



Figure 8: Noah's Thanks: Joseph Koch 1814

We are often sceptical of optimism and believe that optimism carries with it the potential of avoidance and denial. We prefer to adopt the depressive position, to be realistic in their expectations towards life, to guard against optimistic expectations.

The symbol of the rainbow carries the opposite message, it reminds us that optimism is the thing which keeps us from destruction, the symbol which stands against the destructive tendencies of the Self.

## END OF THE NOAH MYTH

20  
AND NOAH BEGAN TO BE AN  
HUSBANDMAN, AND HE PLANTED A  
VINEYARD:

21  
AND HE DRANK OF THE WINE, AND  
WAS DRUNKEN; AND HE WAS  
UNCOVERED WITHIN HIS TENT.

22  
AND HAM, THE FATHER OF CANAAN,  
SAW THE NAKEDNESS OF HIS FATHER,  
AND TOLD HIS TWO BRETHREN  
WITHOUT.

23  
AND SHEM AND JAPHETH TOOK A  
GARMENT, AND LAID IT UPON BOTH  
THEIR SHOULDERS, AND WENT  
BACKWARD, AND COVERED THE  
NAKEDNESS OF THEIR FATHER; AND THEIR FACES  
WERE BACKWARD, AND THEY SAW NOT THEIR  
FATHER'S NAKEDNESS.

24  
AND NOAH AWOKE FROM HIS WINE, AND KNEW WHAT HIS YOUNGER SON HAD DONE UNTO HIM.

25  
AND HE SAID, CURSED BE CANAAN; A SERVANT OF SERVANTS SHALL HE BE UNTO HIS BRETHREN.

26  
AND HE SAID, BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF SHEM; AND CANAAN SHALL BE HIS SERVANT.

27  
GOD SHALL ENLARGE JAPHETH, AND HE SHALL DWELL IN THE TENTS OF SHEM; AND CANAAN  
SHALL BE HIS SERVANT.



Figure 9: *The Drunkenness of Noah*: Giovanni Bellini (1433-1516)

This is an odd end of the myth. Noah, the just and good man who was deemed upstanding enough to survive the destruction of the corrupt others in the world gets drunk, and when his son Ham judges him for that, he is cursed to be a slave for the rest of his life. Jordan Peterson (2017) regards this end of the story as a lesson around respect, respect for the father as an archetypal reality. Of course, he is of the belief that there is a lack of respect for the archetypal father today which can be seen as being an apology for the patriarchy. But we can, at least to an extent, agree with him that Ham (or Caanan as he was known after that incident) was displaying a lack of respect.

Within the context of our discussion today, I want to hypothesize that it shows us a transformation of an aspect of the Self. Maybe there is a message in the fall of Noah, the pious and just man. Is this perhaps a shift in the consciousness of the Self, away from intolerance of imperfection? Also, Noah, the imperfect man was part of the core of life rescued by God. That stood for something, and he had to be treated with respect. More than anything else this part of the story reminds me of Noah's humanness. That humanness needs to be respected.

The text ends the myth of Noah:

<sup>28</sup> AND NOAH LIVED AFTER THE FLOOD THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

<sup>29</sup> AND ALL THE DAYS OF NOAH WERE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS: AND HE DIED.

The story ends with Noah's mortality confirmed. It confirms Genesis 6 verse 3 in the beginning of the myth, stating that man is mortal. The circle has been completed.

## CONCLUSION

A Jungian interpretation of the mythical tale of Noah allows us to describe what happens when a re-configuration of the ego is instigated by the Self. It is a reminder of the destructive potential of the Self. It also carries with it the hope and optimism of new life after the destruction.

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