

## THE STORY OF THE FLOOD AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS IN HEBREW CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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The story of the Flood and Noah's Ark is one of the most popular biblical stories and has been variously rendered in much of the world's literature, including children's literature. The story incorporates the theme of unequivocal compensation: whether as a narrative of punishment and devastation, the fate of the multitude that fails the test of proper conduct; or as a narrative providing incentive for those who exhibit appropriate behavior and are thus redeemed. Children's literature emphasizes these lessons time and time again, as is demonstrated by the continual revisions of this biblical episode.

In this paper, I shall carefully examine three versions of the story of the Flood that were written for children, each one stemming from a different literary period, thus revealing how thematic focus, poetical ideas and concepts of childhood have changed in Hebrew culture.

I discuss Benjamin Levner's *Kol Agadot Yisroel* (All the Legends of Israel, 1898) as a pioneering didactic and moralist example of how, on the interregnum between the periods of *Haskalah* and *Teḥiya*, the story of the flood has been adapted for younger generations. I examine Eliezer Smoli's *Vayihi hamabul al ha'aretz: Gilui yoman tevat Noah* (Do Bring a Flood Upon the Earth: The Unveiling of the Diary of Noah's Ark, 1972) as an agent of national socialization processes. And finally, I present Nurit Zarchi's *Zugot ve-Zot* (Zugot and Zot, 1999) as an example of subversive themes that appear in some postmodern adaptations of the story of the flood, and that contest social values and the traditional didactic interpretations of it.

The emphasis of the study focuses on the development of the concept of childhood in Hebrew and Israeli culture, which is mainly a transition from the perception of a child as an object to control and supervise, to a subject who is invited to critically read a fundamental meta-narrative.