

Noah, Lesson of the Flood

Natural Law or Natural Judgment

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According to the book Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer (chapters 22-23), an ancient collection of Torah legends dating back to Temple times, Noah worked on building the Ark for 52 years. All during that time, he had numerous conversations with the curious who were asking him, "what on earth" was he doing? Noah was not coy or shy. He told them outright what was coming and that the people had better prepare themselves.

In Chapter 22, Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer records that the people of the day did not deny what Noah had to say. They too believed that a flood was coming, but they thought they could either stop it or otherwise protect themselves, without having to make the efforts of repentance before G-d. They did not understand that the level of their imbalance and evil was so "out of whack" that G-d essentially "had it in for them" and that no matter what they tried to do to protect themselves, nothing was going to work. The entire generation had strayed way too far from what nature and nature's G-d could tolerate. The flood had to come to cleanse the Earth.

The evil of the generation of the flood was epitomized by theft, bloodshed, incest and a complete denial of the Divine authority. They essentially proclaimed themselves to be rulers over both Heaven and Earth. Essentially they sinned against nature itself. For this reason the Hebrew text of Genesis specifically uses the Name of G-d Elohim here in the flood story. Elohim brings the flood over the Earth. Elohim is the Name of G-d associated with nature and natural law. The numerical value of the Name Elohim (86) is equal to the Hebrew term for nature (hateva), signifying their relationship.

Humanity is ultimately under the dominion of nature, natural law and nature's Creator, Elohim, even as it says, "In the beginning, Elohim created the Heavens and the Earth" (Gen. 1:1). This is why the Founding Fathers of these United States of America stated in their Declaration of Independence that the laws of nature and nature's G-d bestow upon man inalienable rights, which include life and liberty. They understood the Biblical lesson of the flood that governmental or societal violations of the Divinely ordained natural inalienable rights of everyday human beings brings about unmitigated disasters.

American President Thomas Jefferson summed it up when he declared that, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever." This was Noah's message centuries ago and the same exact message today to this generation. Elohim does judge. The Creator of natural law responds to societal imbalance by turning the laws of nature against the offending society or government, allowing natural upheavals to wreck havoc for the sake of restoring balance. As it was then, so has it been throughout history.

These natural laws are referred to in Rabbinic tradition as the "Seven Laws of the Children of Noah." Seven is the number of general categories that comprise the listing of these laws. The Children of Noah of course refers to all humanity. Therefore, it is best in modern terminology to refer to these laws as universal natural/spiritual laws. To sum up the categories, these include the human obligation to have religion (to know G-d), to honor our inalienable inner spiritual component (to honor G-d, not to deny Him), to extend the right of life (not to murder), the prohibition against theft (be it by an individual or by a governing body), the prohibition against immorality (where certain types of sexuality are defined as unnatural), to establish courts of justice that safeguard the rights of the individual against other persons

and against governments themselves. These general categories include within them sections and subsections of details as does every law code established to uphold these principles. The final category was to not eat parts of any living animal. Aside from the literal understanding of this, it has also been interpreted to include humanity's obligations towards the natural world outside of mankind itself.

Whenever natural law is violated and society becomes so overwhelming corrupt, natural Divine judgment is aroused. There are times when such Divine judgment can be mitigated. This was the case with Jonah who was able to convince the entire city state of Nineveh to change its ways. The promised judgment prophesied by Jonah, however was not mitigated entirely. It was only postponed. For although the people in their entirety repented at Jonah's warning. Still, their remorse was not sincere. They soon resorted to their old ways and Nineveh was ultimately destroyed only a few decades later.

This same Divine/natural determinism is repeated later in the Bible. In 2 Kings 23:25, we have recorded the righteous deeds of King Yoshiyahu of Judah. Of him it is written, "Never before him has there been a king like him, who returned to G-d with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his resources, in accordance to the entire Torah of Moshe and after him no one arose like him." Chapters 22 and 23 of 2 King are replete with the stories of righteous King Yoshiyahu and how he worked effortlessly to restore the holiness to the nation of Judah and to restore the relationship of the people to their G-d in Heaven.

Yet, 2 Kings 23:26 is most damning in its revelation. For after proclaiming to us the righteous of King Yoshiyahu, the text continues and states, "Nevertheless G-d did not relent from His flaring anger, for His anger had flared up against Judah because of all the provocations with which Menasheh (the previous King) had angered Him."

G-d had ordained the destruction of Jerusalem because of all the imbalances created by the former King Menasheh of Judah. Even though his grandson, King Yoshiyahu in total righteousness cleansed the land of evil, still the edict of destruction was in place and nothing was going to change it. Even with all that the righteous King Yoshiyahu did for G-d, even being praised in the language of the Bible for returning to G-d with all his heart and soul more than any other King before him, still he came to an ignominious, apparently wasteful and undeserved end by being killed in battle with the Pharaoh of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29).

What we learn from these clear examples is a message repeated even later in the Book of Daniel (4:14) that G-d watches over the world and when He ordains what it is to be, then there is no way or no one to escape it. Daniel 4 records how when mighty King Nebuchadnezzar became haughty before G-d, Heaven ordained to punish him with a mental illness that would sink him into the depths of terrible psychosis. When this was revealed to the King in a dream, Daniel realizing the truth of it advised the King to turn to acts of righteousness and generous charity as the only way to solicit Divine mercy to help postpone the awful edict (Daniel 4:24). Nevertheless, after some time, when Nebuchadnezzar became haughty again, the text states that the Hidden Hand worked to strike the king's mind turning him into a raving lunatic (literally). Bottom line is that when G-d ordains that it is judgment time, then judgment time it is. No one escapes, no one gets away.

Violations of natural law always lead to natural disasters. This is the Hand of Elohim, the Creator at work. This is why one of the tenets of Judaism is to proclaim that there is both a Judge and Justice in the universe. Almost all religions accept this most basic common fact. However long it takes, Justice does come, most often in the form of natural disasters, but also in the forms of societal upheavals, the likes of which have been common throughout human history everywhere, in every place, culture and time. Ultimately, we are all humans and we share equal responsibilities and equal obligations to one another and to Heaven.

It is a shame how people living today are as spiritually blind as they have always been in the past. With all the warnings we receive and all the signs from Heaven, still, people march forward in their lives oblivious, half-believing, but not really taking to heart that judgment time is coming. Like in the days

of Noah, people acknowledged that it is coming, but still they failed to raise a finger to take the necessary steps to protect and defend themselves. This same laziness, blindness and insanity condemned an entire generation of Jews to death at the hands of Nazis and this same lethargy day possesses the Jews in Israel who stand idly by as they surrender their Land and do nothing in the face of mounting threats to their very survival. Will history repeat itself? What do you think?

Civilized comforts are one of the greatest blessings one can accomplish in life and at the same time they are one of the greatest curses. Comfort makes life all too easy, but sometimes that which is all too easy is all too hard to compromise or give up. This is why so many Jews were unable and thus unworthy to be redeemed from Egypt. Torah legend tells us that the great majority of the number of Jews in Egypt died during the plague of darkness and did not merit to be redeemed. As Solomon said, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9). As it was in the days before the flood, so it was in the days before the redemption from Egypt and so it is again today.

Compare this attitude of denial to sailing on a great luxury cruise ship, with you in the top class cabin, with all the privileges. Then your ship hits an iceberg and begins to sink. As you lie in your cushy suite enjoying the good life you notice that this ship is going down, but you cannot be bothered, you are too busy enjoying the good life. You figure, why not enjoy the good life for the rest of my life, even if that time be very short. What's the alternative, living longer, but less comfortably? Echhhh! Never! So, down with the ship goes the fool with all his luxuries and comforts with him.

How many of us today are sailing on this great cruise ship, that we can symbolically call the S.S. Seduction. For we are all seduced into believing that something is real all the while that it is horribly fake. www.KosherTorah.com

What the future holds is certain. The international economy is destined to collapse. When that happens, in a moment all your investments and money will be gone. The stores will close, there will be nothing left to buy or sell. Anarchy will reign supreme. The worst side of people will roar forth turning civilization into a jungle. Remember the anarchy, murder and mayhem that ensued after the terrible Hurricane Katrina hit the Louisiana coast a number of years ago. The breakdown of society there hit only one city and its surrounding area. Imagine what it would be like if the entire world was struck with such a natural disaster.

One cannot continue a society in violation of natural law and not expect natural judgment to result. Yet, blindness is blindness and the intentionally blind choose to refuse to see. When the time of natural judgment arrives, your worst nightmares will come strikingly true. Not being prepared, you will be overwhelmed, just as the generation was in the days of the flood, just like those in the days of the destruction of the First Temple, just like those in the days of the destruction of the Second Temple, just like in the days of Nazi Germany and just like in the days to come.

But who cares, right? Not you! You're not into the panic thing. You don't believe in the doom and gloom scenario. Isn't it much better to just ignore this stuff and to blissfully trust in G-d and religion. After all, if we have faith, we can make all the problems disappear, right? But of course! G-d is not going to let anything bad happen to anyone. As long as we remain happy, and surround ourselves with our nice ethnic, religious observances, Heaven will magically use its twinkle fairy dust to make all our problems just fade away. With joy to the world, we will magically find all the world's evils to have disappeared. No more extremist Islam, no more world-wide antisemitism and anti-Americanism, no more economic crises, no more terrorism, no more wars, no more worries. All we have to do is believe, hallelujah!

Yes, these are the beliefs of the walking dead. I do not bother to reach out to such misguided blind believers. I have nothing to say to them. They will meet their fate, convincing themselves that, just like in Nazi Germany, this is G-d will for them and that they can do nothing other than to submit. Well, maybe there is some truth to this, in light of the above. G-d does ordain who lives and who dies. But! G-d does not ordain who is spiritually blind and who can spiritually see. This we choose for ourselves.

The weekly Torah portion of Noah stands for us as a warning. What G-d ordains no one will be able to avoid. Yet, those who see that which is coming (Ro'eh HaNolad) and who make preparations stand a chance to solicit Divine Grace and to make it through the narrow times to come. Of course, comfort will have to be sacrificed. For how can one carry the burdens that keeps one away from Heaven along the path that one is taking to get closer to Heaven? One cannot do both. All that hinders us must be removed.

I do not believe by any stretch of the imagination that Mrs. Noah thought that the inside of that smelly Ark was anything nearly as comfortable as the nice home she must have had for so many years, in which she gave birth to her three sons. We have no record of Mrs. Noah complaining about conditions in the Ark. She must have been a "woman of valor" willing to sacrifice what was necessary for that which was necessary. As we all know, behind every good man, stands an even better woman.

So, ladies and gentlemen, who today will hear the call of a modern Noah? The Nazi Holocaust ended in 1945. The Arab Holocaust has been trying to get off the ground since 1948. The War over Jerusalem started in 1967 and the War for the United States started in 2001. I am no prophet, but common sense and current events tells me that we are running out of time. Natural judgment will catch up with us for all our societal violations of natural law. It has always been so in the past and nothing will stop it from happening again in the near future.

Like Noah we have to do the right things. Only in this way can we too be called righteous in our generation, a term which everyone else might use to brand us with scorn. Oh well, it's not like everyone has not been warned and given ample opportunity to choose life!

Anyone looking for Kabbalah had better receive this! Stop making believe that you are religious and start being really religious. Put the fear of G-d first and start preparing with your pocket book alongside your broken and contrite heart. Get this now, while there is still time. Mind you, the end of the world as we know it will not come tomorrow (?), but it is coming closer every day. Every day that we have left is a gift from G-d and is time to prepare. Get caught with your pants down and you know what will happen next. We are now as it was in the days of Noah, but we always have a choice. We cannot change or save the world, but we can always change and save ourselves. May we be so open to the Divine Message and do the right thing.

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