


CHABAD

 RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday night* קדש

Friday 8 October 2010 - New Moon Cheshvan 5771
 Sedra Noah




THE DIVINE IMAGE

ACCORDING TO JEWISH TEACHING, ALL HUMANITY HAS A SPECIAL task given by G-d. This point is brought out in our Sedra¹. The reason for the Flood was robbery, violence and perversion of every kind. The inhabitants of the world were not fulfilling the goal of creation. Our world was intended to be a realm in which the Divine Presence dwells. This depends on human beings making it such a realm. In the generation of Noah, the opposite was happening. So there had to be a fresh start.

After the Flood, G-d gave laws to Noah and his descendants: the Seven Noahide Laws. These are commands about worship of G-d, rather than of idols; about avoidance of murder, robbery, adultery or perversion, and cruelty to animals; about setting up an honest society, with a legal system administrating true justice.

Some of these laws had preceded the Flood. Later, at the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, they were all renewed in G-d's communication to Moses. They are included as part of the Torah transmitted to the Jewish people at Sinai². According to Maimonides, when a non-Jew observes these laws and is conscious of their Divine origin, he or she has the status of a "Righteous Gentile", inheriting the World to Come³.

The Sages tell us that the reason why each human being is called on



Dedicated by Mrs Tzipora Sufrin װj , to the memory and merit of her father k"z ihætk rgcus hfsrn װ װ j "vrv

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to serve G-d through observing these Divine laws is because each person has a Divine dimension within, as is expressed in the Sedra.

Ethics of the Fathers (3:14) states: "Precious is man, for he was created in the Divine image". The proof adduced for this statement is a verse from our Sedra, in which G-d tells Noah the prohibition against murder, giving as reason for the prohibition the fact that "G-d made man in the Divine image" (Gen.9:6).

Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, disciple of the famous Maharal of Prague, states in his commentary on Ethics of the Fathers that the words "Precious is man, for he was created in the Divine image" apply to all humanity. He says this is shown by the fact that the basis for this statement is the verse from our Sedra, expressing the Noahide law against murder: a law which applies to all mankind. Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller then explains that since every person is created in the Divine image, they are required to observe the Divine commands expressed in the Seven Noahide Laws.

This helps us understand the special role of the Jewish people. According to Maimonides, the Jew has the responsibility to communicate the Seven Noahide Laws to the rest of the world and to persuade them to observe them⁴. The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggests that Rabbi Akiva's words help us understand how to do this. The Jew has the task to explain to humanity that each person is precious, for he or she is created in the Divine image. Through this the idea can be transmitted that since one is created in the Divine image, one must observe G-d's commands, the Seven Noahide Laws⁵.

The effect of the proper observance of the laws of the Torah, both by the Jewish people, keeping their 613 Commandments and ultimately also by the non-Jews properly observing the Noahide Laws, will be to make our world into a realm in which the Divine Presence openly dwells. This will be fully achieved in the time of Moshiach, when all humanity will be at peace, devoted to fulfilling the Commands of the Creator.

1. Genesis chs.6:9 – 11:32. 2. In the same way, laws for the Jewish people which preceded Sinai, such as circumcision, derive their force from the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai (Rambam, Commentary on the Mishnah, Chullin, end of ch.7). 3. *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, 8:11. 4. Ibid. 8:10. 5. See *Likkutei Sichot* vol. 15 p.58.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA NOAH

PROTECTION FROM THE FLOOD

“Take out your Chumashim, your books of the Torah.”
Rabbi Levine’s voice ran clear through the class.

“Boring...” groaned Michael, and the boys around him laughed.

“Michael! What did you just say?” The teacher roared and suddenly it didn’t seem so funny. Michael could feel his heart thumping as he mumbled another “boring,” but this time there was no laughter accompanying it.

“Why do you think it’s boring?” Rabbi Levine asked.

“Well Torah’s so old – like what’s it got to do with us now?”

“Yeah” the boys chimed in.

“Well actually everything in the Torah has a lesson and relevance for us today. Take a look at this week’s Sedra – Noah.

“Hashem told Noah that in order to save himself and his family from the Flood, he should build a *teiva* – an Ark. Noah also brought in some of the animals into the Ark, just as G-d told him; and everything in the *teiva*, in the Ark, got saved from the harsh waters which destroyed the rest of the world.”

“Great - so if I build myself an Ark then I’ll be protected from any floods – that’s really relevant!” said Chaim sarcastically.

“Actually you’re not that far off from it, Chaim” Rabbi Levine smiled. “But just let me finish and then maybe you’ll realize what this has really got to do with you.

The word ‘*teiva*’ doesn’t only mean Ark, it can also mean ‘word’. When Noah stepped into the *teiva*, the Ark, he and everything else in it was protected from the dangerous waters. So too when we step into the words of Torah and Prayer we too will be protected from the negative things in this world.”

“How can we step into the words?” asked Michael. “We can say them, but what do you mean step into them?”

“Good question Michael. Stepping into the words of Torah and Prayer means studying Torah and praying to G-d - but not just as a one-off. Our whole day should be enveloped in G-dliness. Through this we won’t be affected by anything negative, by our personal equivalent of the Flood.”

“You mean, if people are fighting or arguing, or something very unpleasant is going on, if we just focus on Torah we won’t notice. But shouldn’t we try to stop them fighting?” asked Chaim.

“You are right” said Rabbi Levine. “Some bad things you can stop by getting directly involved. But in other cases you might just make it worse. And sometimes the problem is inside you, not outside. Like if someone is feeling very angry, or disappointed, or upset, or worried. If there is no positive practical step to be taken, the best thing for him or her is to enter the *teiva*, the Ark of the words of Torah and Prayer. Then one gains strength and has a better idea about what one *should* do.”

“So what are we waiting for, let’s go get into the Ark!” Michael said, taking out his Chumash, his Torah book. It suddenly looked very inviting.

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