

Parshas Noach

This week we read Parsha number 2, Noach. Already in the early stages of the creation of the world, humanity devolved into barbarism for which Hashem was seeking a reset. The reason according to the Posuk, was that the world was filled with robbery. It is interesting that the acts of wildness, was specifically reflected in robbery. Midrash Rabbah on Posuk 6:13 explains that the difference between the generation of the tower of Babel versus the generation of the flood was that even at the Tower of Babel there was love, whereas in the generation of the flood there was complete and utter selfishness reflected through robbery.

Robbery leads to violence, and other inhumane activity. But where does robbery begin. Is it blatant stealing? The gemara in Bava Kamma 119a states, Rabbi Yochanan said that when a person robs even a tiny amount it is as though he took his life away. Furthermore ethically, one cannot even steal time, or knowledge when they know something a counter party does (geneivas daas). Or perhaps borrowing without permission. Meaning stealing doesn't begin with a major theft, disrespect for boundaries begins with a small seemingly inadvertent act but could cascade into a devolved society.

I think this is reflected in the narrative of the generation of the flood, as it is an insight into the reality of humanity. The Alter Rebbe in a ma'amer from this parsha explains why these parts of history are even codified into the Torah. Our Chassidic masters offer explanations as to what the teiva and the floodwaters mean as a servant

of Hashem. From their drawing the story into real life we can peel back other layers and explain specifically that Hashem through the Torah is showing where and how people can act. One may posit that the Torah is barbaric and could be thrown out as a wholly true, because how can Hashem allow for calamitous events (such as the Mabul) to have taken place.

The Mabul is a response to a human problem. We are sentient conscious beings, and what differentiates us from animals is our power of communication and ability to circumvent animalistic tendencies and be human. When one steals, even in the smallest sense, it begins the process of devolving humans into barbarism. The response post Mabul was for the world to relay on having distinct order that was heretofore nonexistent. The 7 Noahide laws give order to society, for what, anthropologists or other religion deniers as being core to Humanity. That is the ability to be human doesn't need to come from Hashem, which we see is not the case. It took 10 generations of people born from Adam who was created by Hashem to devolve. No rules, people turned to animals. Hashem saw this, and the 7 laws of Noach became revealed. The 7 seemingly one could take for granted as being true without being told them. This is not the case. Especially since the 7 reflect basic tenets through which humans can act as humans. This is the moment of revelation of universal morality, that we all take for granted now. The first 2 (not to profane God's name, and not to curse the creator) give credence to the ability for the human to believe in a higher power for which we don't always understand, whereas it is unknown to us that any species other than humans have the ability to recognize a

higher power. Again, importantly differentiating humans from animals. Which is part of our existence, to act as humans, and not completely indulge in our animalistic desires. Do not murder, and do not eat limb of a living animal, seem obvious not to do. But murdering without realizing that this is inhumane is not obvious. Humans have been performing unjust murders for centuries. Humans have the unique ability to convince themselves that death is justified (I am not saying there isn't a place for it. But the commandment not to murder is against wanton behavior). Eating a living animal is exactly how a prime predator eats its meals, we are not that as a species, yet we are told not to act like that, because it is not obvious that humans won't act this way. Do not steal and not to commit sexual improprieties are the next 2. Do not steal we see led to barbarism in Noach's time because stealing is on a spectrum, even the smallest act is "like murdering someone" (Bava Kamma 119a). Not stealing is a distinctly human characteristic, that is our ability to overcome our desire or instinct, even on the smallest scale to take something belonging to someone else. Similarly, sexual improprieties ought not look like sense of control, outside of it reflecting how to not act in indulgence with our animalistic desires. Animalistic indulgences (which humans have) can lead to dehumanization, which could lead to barbarism. Much like the Torah is telling us with the narrative of Noach's generation. Finally, once we conquer the animal within, the highest reflection humanity is to establish a justice system. A justice system means that in society there are laws and rules and governance, again a distinctly human ability to believe in a code of laws and system.

All this remember, are laws from Hashem. At the end of the day Torah is infused in everything, and it is because Hashem gave them to us that is true and is a universal ethic and code of morality that is found in just about every society on Earth.

The Zohar on Bereishis 7:11 explained that in the 6th century of the 6th millennium the gates of supernal wisdom will be opened, and the gates of earthly wisdom will spring open, preparing the world to be elevated to the 7th millennium" (Likkutei Sichos, Volume 15, Noach, Sichah 2). Part of the reflection of the story according to Chassidus to take the events of the Mabul and apply it to our lives as servants of Hashem. For example, the word Teiva- (ark) shares the same meaning as "words" or "letters". Torah and water are compared ("Eyn Mayim Elah Torah" as Abarbanel writes on Bereishis 1:2:6, and we see in Bava Kamma 82a and other places, and "Torah Nimshelah Limayim" as we see in Bereishis Rabba, Ramban on Bereishis 29:2:1, Tanya Perek 4 Lekutei Amarim etc.) The mabul, a rushing of water is the purifier for the world. It is also associated with Torah becoming central (through the Noach laws) to morality and ethics where they were otherwise forgotten. Furthermore, there is a parallel between the 40 days and nights of rain to the 40 se'ah (volume) of a Kosher Mikva that is used to purify unholy things. Essentially one ought to build a "teiva" which they can enter the world of Torah and save themselves from being swallowed up by the negativity that exists in the world around. But the teiva (made of gopher wood and pitch) literally has the ability to save us, humans, who spiritually operate on a higher plane, but are sustained by lower (domeim, tzomeiach, chay) beings, that are able to be sustenance for their source is rooted higher.

But the Zohar's prediction is even deeper, when the wellsprings of supernal wisdom will spring forth, that came out around the time of the Ba'al Shem Tov with the introduction to widespread teaching of Chassidus, and the industrial and scientific revolutions in the earthly world. His prediction was absolutely on point. It is in this era that we can harness the knowledge of Chassidus and understanding of Torah, and use the principals and earthly technology to spread Torah in a way that was heretofore not possible, which is, the initiation of ushering the 7th millennium of Mashiach.

Much like Noach was a key generation from creation to reimagine a world with Torah and morality in it, we are a generation/epoch in human history that will witness our own mabul of Torah burst forth, so we can ultimately welcome Mashiach speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos