

Replanting the Garden

Drash on Parashah 2; Noach

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*"The heart is more deceitful than anything else and mortally sick. Who can fathom it?
[Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 17:9]*

If you don't mind, I'm going to start out in last week's Parashah. If you do, too bad, the message is written and I'm not changing it now. Don't worry, I'll get to Noach soon enough.

I want us to notice how easy it was for the perfection of the Garden of Eden to be marred. God created a garden, which was a type of sanctuary. In fact, notice that Kayin was expelled to the east of Eden, so the way back to the Garden and thus the presence of God would be westward, the same as going into the tabernacle and the temple. Anyway, the garden was a perfect sanctuary, where people lived without sin, and lived in the presence of God daily. There was nothing to tempt Adam and Havah until the serpent showed up. There was no tv, magazines, rude neighbors, bad parenting, nothing to blame for sin, yet it seemed so easy for the Adversary to lure both of the inhabitants of the garden away from their state of perfection. It was like luring a child away from schoolwork with candy. "2+2 equals..oh look, chocolate!"

If it was that easy for Adam and Havah to fall into sin, and it seemed equally easy for Kayin to turn his contempt for his brother and God into murder, then where does that leave the rest of the world outside Eden? His fear of being killed indicates that Kayin had some contact with these outsiders who may have been the influence for his murder of Hevel. He knew how wicked the rest of the world was even then, let alone ten generations later when we get to the life of Noach.

In our American culture today, we like to think that people are inherently good. If someone does something evil, it is only because of some kind of outside influence that caused them to do it. They hang out with the wrong crowd, they watch the wrong kinds of movies, listen to the wrong kind of music, are rejected by society, had a poor childhood, the list goes on. The fact that we fail to realize is that people are naturally inclined toward evil. Goodness and righteousness takes work. In the beginning was darkness, and light had to be created. Left on its own, as a result of the fall, Creation naturally spirals toward disorder and death. Humans are no exception.

*For there isn't a righteous person on earth who does [only] good and never sins.
[Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 7:20]*

This is the primary fault- of democracy. The power of government is put in the hands of people who are naturally inclined toward evil. Just look at the spiritual state of

other democratic countries like England, where Biblical faith is all but gone, and Islam is the fastest growing religion, apart from secular humanism and atheism. America is doomed to destruction, not by terrorists, but by the very governmental system that it is based on.

*At that time there was no king in Isra'el; a man simply did whatever he thought was right.
[Shoftim/Judges 17:6]*

*There can be a way which seems right to a person, but at its end are the ways of death.
[Mishlei/Proverbs 14:12]*

In the time of Noach, the people of the world were as wicked as they could possibly get. We also see from Scripture that the health of the land is linked to the sins of the people, so I suspect that the natural order of the world was turning to death and destruction as well. This may have resulted in an apocalyptic type situation where money and resources were scarce, which only served to add to the evil of humanity. This would lead to a downward spiral which would only lead to certain destruction of the entire human race, if God did not intervene. Similar times are coming.

For there will be trouble then worse than there has ever been from the beginning of the world until now, and there will be nothing like it again! Indeed, if the length of this time had not been limited, no one would survive; but for the sake of those who have been chosen, its length will be limited. [Mattityahu/Matthew 24:21-22]

What we see as God's judgment is really divine cleansing. Rather than all people being destroyed by the wickedness of Man, God judges the wicked in order to save the righteous.

In the Garden, there was perfection, and a seed of sin was planted in the middle of it which quickly spread to a point that the inhabitants had to be expelled in order to preserve the Garden itself. In the story of Noach, we find the opposite situation taking place. In the midst of a desperately wicked world, Noach is instructed to build a sanctuary, a refuge, for himself and his family in the form of an ark. It is much easier to bring sin into a sanctuary, than it is to create a sanctuary in the midst of a world controlled by the Adversary.

He was instructed to do something that would have made no sense to anyone else. He was building a boat in a dry land. The ocean was far away and it hadn't even rained...ever! I'm sure he heard every ridicule and joke in the book. "Hey Noach! What are you going to make next? A horseless chariot? A solar torch with black flame? Hey, don't you know we live on sand not on water?" This is somewhat like, "Hey, don't you know we are under grace and not under the law?" The thing was, Noach knew that, though the water was far away, it was coming." Likewise, we know that the Living Torah is coming and if we are not prepared, we will die in the flood of His judgment.

"The Kingdom of Heaven at that time will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible. The foolish ones took lamps with them but no oil, whereas the others took flasks of oil with their lamps. Now the bridegroom was late, so they all went to sleep. It was the middle of the night when the cry rang out, 'The bridegroom is here! Go out to meet him!' The girls all woke up and prepared their lamps for lighting. The foolish ones said to the sensible ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both you and us. Go to the oil dealers and buy some for yourselves.' But as they were going off to buy, the bridegroom came. Those who were ready went with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Later, the other bridesmaids came. 'Sir! Sir!' they cried, 'Let us in!' But he answered, 'Indeed! I tell you, I don't know you!' So stay alert, because you know neither the day nor the hour.
[Mattityahu/Matthew 25:1-13]

This is not too unlike the people who may have been knocking on the door of the ark after the floods started rising, and it was too late. The door had been shut. Suddenly, the boat in the desert thing made much more sense. Our Messiah is coming to claim His Bride. Are you ready? Are you going to be found wearing His robes of righteousness, or will you be found naked in your disobedience to the ways of the Kingdom?

By God's grace, Noah was made aware of the coming cleansing of the earth and the exact way of escaping the certain death it would bring. Noah still had to actually put forth the work of building the ark in the midst of adversity. He had to do things that did not make sense. He had to trust in God and His Word to bring forth the salvation that was promised. Through his efforts, Noah succeeded in building a sanctuary for his family to live in while the floodwaters engulfed the world outside.

But Adonai has become my stronghold, my God is my rock of refuge. [Tehellim/Psalm 94:22]

The ark was a refuge God provided for Noah and his family. Salvation was provided for Noah's family and all the animals that boarded the ark. This salvation was provided by God, by His grace, however, it was not without work by the hand of Noah. Without God, Noah's family would have died with the rest of humanity. Without Noah's work and obedience, the same would have been true. Any relationship requires effort on both sides. God has given us an ark to escape the fires of hell, through the shed blood of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. However, we still need to build the ark ourselves. This is accomplished by following the instructions for life He has given us in Torah. Noah built the ark exactly as God instructed. He didn't use longer or shorter beams because they were more convenient to use. He used gopher wood, not cedar, oak, or pine. Perhaps those other materials would have been less expensive or more beautiful. He could have coated the ark in gold rather than pitch as a tribute to the greatness of God. Any of those things would have been a derivation from the instructions God gave to Noah, and would have been sin. The ark may not have provided the salvation God intended. In his faith, Noah knew that when God said the

ark was to be made of gopher wood there was a reason for it, and the ark was made of gopher wood. "Gopher wood? Why gopher wood? Noah! Just Go fer wood!"

Since Noah obeyed God, he and his family was able to rest in the midst of God's judgment, much like the people of Israel were able to do the same in Egypt after applying the blood on their doors for Passover. Noah's name means "rest", which with all the work he did, the name of "rest" is ironic at best. Just as with the Sabbath rest, we must not only do but complete all our work in six days so that we can rest on the seventh. Noah had to build the ark so that his family could rest in the time of judgment. Yeshua had to come to earth and die on a cross so that all those who would put their faith in Him would be able to rest from the eternal punishment for their sins. As we go about the work God gives us through His Torah and His Spirit, we work to not only build an ark, but we replant the Garden in a desert of sin.

We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet Adonai laid on him the guilt of all of us. [Yasha'yahu/Isaiah 53:6]