

11-2-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene - *Noah* (rest)
Torah Portion: Gen 6:9 – 11:32
Haftarah: Isa 54:1 – 55:5
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Acts 15:19-21

Under the Law Part 18 – Noahic Covenant

Central question: Do you understand the progression of entering into the various levels of a covenant relationship with G-d?

Today we are in parasha *Noah*. It takes its name from the ninth word of the passage in English, and the third word in the original Hebrew text, where Noah is first mentioned.

Gen 6:9-12

9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

אלה⁹ תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים הנה
 are These the generations of Noah: Noah: a man just and perfect was
 9999 428 8435 5146 5146 582 6662 9999 8549 1961

בדורתיו את־האלהים התהלך־נח:
 in his generations, with God. walked Noah and
 1755 854 430 1980 9999 5146

ויולד נח שלשה בנים את־שם את־חם ואת־יפת:¹⁰
 And begat Noah three sons, sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
 3205 5146 7969 1121 853 8035 853 2526 853 3315

ותשחת ותשחת הארץ לפני האלהים והמלא והארץ חמס:¹¹
 also was corrupt The earth also was corrupt before God, and was filled with violence. the earth
 7843 776 6440 430 4390 776 2555

וירא אלהים את־הארץ והנה נשחטה כִּי־השחית ויֵבֶר
 And looked upon God the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for had corrupted
 7200 430 853 776 2009 7843 3588 7843

כָּל־בָּשָׂר את־דרכו על־הארץ:¹²
 all flesh upon his way the earth.
 3605 1320 853 1870 5921 776

We have now finished the high holy days as set out in Leviticus 23, and have begun our Torah reading cycle anew. Today we are in the second parasha today. And so, since we are talking about Noah, this is a good place to resume the teaching on the covenant of G-d. Before I describe the Noahic covenant, I wish to lay a bit of groundwork.

There is but one covenant, but it has several “layers.” The covenant is simply expressed by us as “You are my G-d.” As expressed by G-d, it is, “You are My people.” The depth to which any one of us wishes to be connected to G-d as His people is in our control. He offers the opportunity

to each of us to grow to the next level, but He does not condemn anyone for choosing to stay at whatever level we choose.

We have already seen, in the teachings on justification and sanctification, that justification is an event, and sanctification is a process. I often liken justification to a doorway, which divides one world from another. The world of death in sin is divided from the world of life in faith. When anyone walks through that doorway by faith in G-d, he passes from death to life.

Rom 3:23-29

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from

works of the Law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

And it is at this point, after coming to faith in G-d, that the process of sanctification – living a holy life – becomes possible. No good deeds performed *before entering that doorway* of faith carry with them any value in G-d's economy. In fact, they are classed among evil deeds of lawlessness (Torah-less-ness).

Matt 7:20-23

"So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

But once through the door of justification, our keeping of the commandments of Torah are credited to us as “good deeds” (Heb. *masim tovim*), and are the basis upon which we receive rewards and status in the World to Come.

Matt 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is the “righteousness” level that we must exceed? Once you understand that the term “righteousness” means “through the doorway of justification” then you can see that there were some of the Parushim who

had the appearance of “good deeds” but those were merely trappings of holiness, and not actual holiness, because they had not yet passed through the doorway of justification, or possibly they had exited that doorway.

One who has walked through that doorway into life still has the ability to turn back and walk out that door of justification. Once he does so, all the good deeds he has done in sanctification are left behind, and not credited to him by G-d.

Ezek 3:20-21

20 "Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he shall die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. 21 "However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself."

And so we must solidify the concept of what is “righteousness”, and how does that differ from “holiness.” The proof of this division is first shown

with the faith of Noah. Noah is described as, “a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.” Each of these statements carries with it much meaning.

A “righteous man.” *אִישׁ צַדִּיק* [*ish tzadik*]. Note that at this time there was no written Torah which defined the “good deeds” of holiness. But the description of Noah includes another modifier, “blameless.” *תָּמִים* *Tamim* includes the concepts of complete, whole, entire, innocent, and wholesome.

Thus, Noah was described as being a man of “complete righteousness.” This signifies that he had entered the doorway of justification by faith in G-d, and had not turned back. We can see this concept repeated in the life of Job, who was likewise described as

Job 1:1

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.

The degree to which Noah connected with G-d is the next descriptor of his character. He “walked with G-d.” This tells us that he had a more

intimate relationship with G-d than the others in his society, and probably also in his immediate family.

We will see that this intimate relationship allowed Noah to hear from G-d some very basic aspects of holiness which would later be revealed in the Torah. These new teachings were written on his heart. One aspect of that advanced teaching is regarding kosher animals.

Gen 7:2

2 You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;

Now let's examine briefly holiness. Holiness comes from departing from the ways of the world, and following G-d's ways. To be "holy" is to be set apart. G-d is holy because He is set apart from all others.

As we follow G-d's ways, as found codified in Torah, we also are "set apart" from all others.

Lev 11:44

44 'For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy

And,

Lev 20:7-8

7 'You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. 8 'And you shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you.

Although holiness is not an aspect of the Noahic Covenant, I am touching on the concept of holiness now to make the distinction between the Noahic Covenant and a greater one which I will teach on later, which will indeed be characterized by holiness.

How G-d describes to Noah the species which he is to gather by seven pairs, helps to show that a small portion of the concept of Kosher was available to Noah through a covenantal relationship. G-d commands Noah to gather, “every clean animal by sevens.”

The statement “clean animal” in Hebrew is, *הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה* *habhemah hatahorah*.

The word translated as “clean” is from the Hebrew word *tahor*. It is the same word as appears in Leviticus 11:47 which gives us the larger context of a different covenant, which involves the fullness of kosher.

Lev 11:46-47

46 This is the law regarding the animal, and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters, and everything that swarms on the earth, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean [Heb. *hatahor*], and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten.

The Noahic covenant is the entry-level position in the hierarchy of covenant relationships. One enters this status only by acting upon his faith in G-d, and it is demonstrated as genuine by his observance of the seven characteristics of faith. So, now let’s examine the details of the Noahic covenant.

What is the condition of a person prior to entering into this covenant? He is outside the family of G-d, and by whom the offer of redemption has not been accepted. In Hebrew, this person is called a “ger” [alien]. Also, a common term which refers to such a person is “gentile” [stranger, non-believer, non-Jew].

To whom is this covenant extended? Noah, his descendants (all mankind), and all living creatures on the earth.

Gen 9:8-11

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,
9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant **with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.**

How long does this covenant last? Forever.

Gen 9:11

And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall **never again** be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.

What are the benefits of this covenant? Noah and his descendants (all mankind) can multiply and fill the earth, and mankind will be at the top

of the hierarchy of what is created on the Earth. Further, mankind is permitted to kill and eat all animals, as well as all plants.

Gen 9:1-4

9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

What is the sign of this covenant? The rainbow.

Gen 9:12-17

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; 13 **I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.** 14 And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud,

15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 And God said to Noah, **"This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."**

What are the requirements for those under this covenant?

To answer this question takes a bit more study. I will place them in order, and comment on their origin.¹

1. Not to worship idols.

This is supported by an alternative interpretation of the word חָמָס, [*hamas*] in Gen 6:11, which normally means “violence,” but can also mean “idolatry.” Likewise “corruption” can refer to idolatry.

2. Not to curse G-d.

¹ See Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 56b for more information on this.

A presumed characteristic of those who rejected G-d before the flood.

3. Not to commit murder.

This is derived from the passage in Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."

4. Not to commit adultery or engage in sexual immorality.

This is supported by the interpretation of the passage in Gen 6:12 which said all flesh was corrupted. The Hebrew use of this term incorporates both the concepts of idolatry as well as sexual immorality.² The passage on the nephelim (powerful men of greater height) in Genesis 6:4 suggests that these powerful people simply took for themselves what women they wanted, and may have even raped them.

5. Not to steal.

This is derived from the use of the word שָׁדַח, which can also mean to take something from someone else by violent means.

6. Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal, or blood.

This is derived from Genesis 9:4, "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." The prohibition of eating blood extends to the eating of a piece of an animal

² See also Deuteronomy 4:16

taken from it while it is still alive, for that piece still has the “life blood” within it.

7. To establish courts of justice.

This requirement is debated among our Sages. Some say it arose with Noah, others insist it arose only with Israel, when G-d gave instructions regarding justice. For those who include this law, it is derived from Genesis 2:16 where, “the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;” The phrase “commanded” appears again in Genesis 18:19 where G-d recognizes that Abraham will conduct justice within his family, to do “righteousness and justice.”

What is the term applied to a person who has embraced the Nohaic covenant? A *ger toshav*. [a sojourning stranger].

Some have expanded on the Noahide commands to include those practices that naturally flow from that level of covenant. They would include: charity; acts of kindness; honoring and respecting parents; prayer to G-d; contemplation of His wisdom and greatness; and respect for the magnificence of His creation.

There is a strong parallel found in the book of Acts, when the Beit Din at Jerusalem (presided over by Yacov the chief Rabbi) had to deal with the phenomenon of many from among the nations (gentiles, and *gerim*) were coming into the family of G-d by faith.

We find in Acts 15 that many goyim were coming to faith in our G-d, and a decision was needful regarding how they should be directed to live, as new believers.

Some of the Parushim insisted that these new believers must be circumcised and directed to follow the Torah (verse 5). After considerable debate on the matter, Yacov made a decision on behalf of the Beit Din.

Acts 15:19-21

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

What Yacov is doing here is rejecting the requirements which pertain to a higher level of covenant, those being circumcision and following Torah, because to do this would bypass the entry-level covenant, that of the *ger toshav*. Yacov recognized that to require these new believers to jump to this higher level at the first of their walk of faith would be requiring too much of them. They would be discouraged.

Yacov understood the value of the gentle entry-level Nohaic covenant, and starting there would allow those new believers a chance to learn more about G-d as time went by, and they could grow gradually as they learned Torah, just as every other believer has done up to this time.

Yacov knew that the Torah was read in a continuing cycle from beginning to end, and back to the beginning again. No matter when the new believer began attending the synagogue, if he stayed there through one Torah cycle, he would be exposed to it all. As he had questions, he could inquire of the more mature believers with whom he associated in the synagogue.

So, Yacov determined to fashion a bit of an addition to the seven Noahide laws, each of which was important in its own right. Several of the existing Noahide commands were repeated.

1. Not to worship idols – repeated.

2. Not to curse G-d – already a requirement.
3. Not to commit murder – already a requirement.
4. Not to commit adultery or engage in sexual immorality. – repeated.
5. Not to steal. – already a requirement.
6. Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal, or blood. – modified.
7. To establish courts of justice. – already a requirement, and existing.

Yacov used his discretion to modify some of the Noahide commandments so that they would more likely fit with the new believers who were coming into the synagogue.

These four stated requirements represented the hallmarks of pagan worship, and putting these practices away would demonstrate to the other people in the synagogue that the new believer was actually serious about his new faith, and new walk. That way, he would be accepted in the synagogue as a *ger toshav*, who had passed from death to life through faith in G-d, and who now has the opportunity to grow into even deeper levels of G-d's covenant relationship.

But whether he ever grows beyond this entry-level covenant status, if he continues in his faith, this believer is in the family of G-d and will be saved.