

October 30, 2016 - Genesis 6:9 – 7:24 - Noah and the flood

Readings: Genesis 6:9 – 7:24 - Noah and the flood

Psalm 5

Haftorah - Isaiah 54:9-17 + 55:5

Isaiah 60:18 – 61:4 + 9

The Days of Noah

Noah is described as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5)

Matthew 24:37-51 - “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Noah was “blameless in his generation.” This may refer to the fact that his bloodline was uncorrupted by the Nephilim. But certainly it had to do with his faith in God. Rabbinical opinion was divided on whether Noah was only “righteous” because everyone else in his wicked generation was evil. Some of the rabbis assert that Noah himself was included in the divine decree of destruction, but that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8) for the sake of his descendants. (The Messiah?)

The faith of the patriarchs is usually related somehow to Messiah. Jesus said Abraham “saw my day and was glad.” Romans 4:3 - “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

The ark a type of Salvation in Christ

Perhaps Noah “saw Christ’s day” in the typology of the ark itself:

The clouds of Divine judgment also burst upon the Redeemer as He suffered in our place: “All Thy waves and thy billows are gone over Me” (Ps. 42:7)

The flood is a type of Baptism - 1 Peter 3:20 - “wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by (or through) water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

The Ark was God’s idea not man’s; provided by God through grace; made of wood like the cross; its plan was revealed beforehand; a refuge from divine judgment like the cross; one window to look upward to heaven (we walk by faith); only one way in; an invitation to enter provided: “Then the Lord said to Noah, “Come into the ark...” Genesis 7:1; they were shut in securely by God; it was “pitched within and without with pitch” (Genesis 6:14) (pitch = *kephar* = “atonement, covering,” where we get Yom Kippur)

The Flood in Ancient Myth - it’s an old story

“The flood motif is so widespread and universal that it must be very old and must have been taken over from the original tales of the “African Eve.” If so, flood myths go back to a time well before the last Ice Age.”

— From “The Origins of the World’s Mythologies” by E. J. Michael Witzel, professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University, 2012.

In other words, Witzel says it would rule out diffusion from a late Near Eastern source, or even stories about melting glacier floods from Ice Age events.

Witzel, who is the current leading expert on world mythology, reconstructs a single original African source for man’s collective myths, dating back some 100,000 years. He says these common myths were recounted by the communities of the “African Eve,” a group of a few thousand primordial ancestors proposed by studies of mitochondrial DNA. The stories include a remembrance of a High God who withdrew from dealings with the human race and is no longer worshipped because of a human transgression of a food taboo, and another tale of a devastating flood. They are the earliest evidence of ancient spirituality, he says. “Their common features survive today in all major religions.”

Examples of world flood myths

<http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/flood-myths.html>

The flood myths are often remarkably like the biblical story. The Babylonian “Ark Tablet” written around 1900 B.C. talks of a “circular” ark, like the coracles Marsh Arabs still use in southern Iraq, in which the animals enter “two each, two by two.”

—From The Daily Telegraph, <http://buff.ly/1cQR9Ua>

Reflected in the Heavens?

In many myths, there is also a reflection of the knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes, the wobble of the earth’s axis in which a new constellation appears to rise in the east every 2,160 years, signaling a new “age” and returning to its starting point after 23,000 years (the age of aquarius succeeds the age of pisces, for instance).

Conversely, an “old age” has submerged just below the horizon, as if it were drowned. This would be a recurring witness to the reality of a cosmic flood.

The oldest temple yet unearthed is Göbekli Tepe in southern Turkey, which is 12,000 years old. Several enclosures display a ring of 12 T-shaped stone pillars covered with depictions of animals, birds and insects, which hint at a zodiacal division of the sky. Giulio Magli, an archaeoastronomer at the Polytechnic University of Milan in Italy, thinks the stone circles were aligned with the rising of the star Sirius. Sirius would have been below the horizon until around 9300 BC, when it would have suddenly popped into view, due to the precession of the equinoxes.

See <http://buff.ly/2f0esUr>

All that to say that ancient people were sensitive to celestial events, seeing in them the only “real” events.

The Babylonian flood story also hints at a cataclysmic shift and disappearance of stars:

Marduk speaks:

“When I stood up from my sea, and let the flood break in, then the judgment of the earth and Heaven went out of joint...

“The gods, which trembled, the stars of heaven - their position changed, and I did not bring them back.”

The Flood in Rabbinic Literature

See - Noah in rabbinic literature

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_in_rabbinic_literature

Midrash of the flood of Noah states it was not a global deluge: "The deluge in the time of Noah was by no means the only flood with which this earth was visited. The first flood [in the wicked days of Enosh] did its work of destruction as far as Jaffa, and the one of Noah's days extended to Barbary."

According to Midrash Agadah on Genesis v. 29, Noah obtained his name, which means "rest," only after he had invented implements for tilling the ground, which, owing to the lack of such implements, had yielded only thorns and thistles (comp. Genesis 3:18). In this manner Noah really brought rest to mankind and to the earth itself.

Some of the rabbis assert that Noah himself was included in the divine decree of destruction, but that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8) for the sake of his descendants.

Noah, foreseeing that a flood would destroy the world on account of its corruption, refused to marry on the ground that his offspring would perish. God, however, ordered him to take a wife, so that after the Flood he might repeople the earth (Tan., Bereshit, 39; "Sefer haYashar," section "Noah")

2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah a “preacher of righteousness.” But the Genesis account nowhere states that Noah preached to those around him. However, several later writings do: Josephus, Antiquities 1.3.1; Genesis Rabbah 30:7; Sibylline Oracles 1.128029, 145-49, 199.

The word “deluge” (kataklysmos) is used only of Noah’s Flood in 2 Peter 2:5. However it is also used of the Flood in Wisdom 10:4 and Josephus Ant. 5.566.

When Noah was 480 years old all the righteous sons of men were dead, except Methuselah and Noah himself. At God's command they both announced that 120 years would be given to men for repentance; if in that time they had not mended their evil ways and repented, the earth would be destroyed.

After Methuselah’s death seven more days were allowed as days of mourning ("shib'ah"). During these seven days God changed the natural order of things,

converting day into night and vice versa, to remind the wicked of their perversion (Midrash ha-Gadol, p. 155; Sanh. 108b).

But their plea was in vain; even while Noah was engaged in building the ark the wicked made sport of him and his work, saying: "If the Flood should come, it could not harm us. We are too tall; and, moreover, we could close up with our feet [which were of monstrous size] the springs from below." (Being descendants of the "sons of God," they were of immense stature; see Fall of Angels; Giants). In fact, they resorted to these tactics; but God heated the water, and their feet and the flesh of their bodies were scalded (Pirke R. El. xxii, end).

—<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6192-flood-the>

According to one legend, God showed Noah with His finger how to make the ark (Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer xxiii.); but according to the Sefer Noah (Adolf Jellinek, "B. H." iii. 155-160), Noah learned how to build it, and mastered as well the various sciences, from the Sefer Razi'el (the book from which the angel Raziel taught Adam all the sciences), which had been brought to him by the angel Raphael.

The construction of the ark lasted 52 years; Noah purposely working slowly, in the hope that the people would take warning therefrom and would repent (Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer l.c.).

The Sefer haYashar describes another method for distinguishing clean and unclean animals: the clean animals and fowls crouched before Noah, while the unclean ones remained standing.

By displacing two stars in the constellation of Kimah (Orion or the Pleiades) God brought on the Deluge (Midrash ha-Gadol, p. 156; comp. Ber. 58b, 59a).

According to some rabbis, Noah's faith was so small that he did not enter the ark until he stood ankle deep in water (Genesis Rabba xxxii. 9); others declare, on the contrary, that Noah waited for God's directions to enter the ark, just as he awaited His permission to leave it (ib. 34.4; Midrash Agadat Bereshit, in Jellinek, "B. H." iv. 11).

The people then assembled in great numbers around the ark in order to break into it; but they were destroyed by the lions and other wild animals which also surrounded it (Tanhuma., Noah, 10; Genesis Rabba 32.14; Sefer haYashar, l.c.).

As the waters rose the true character of Noah's contemporaries became evident; with extreme cruelty they hurled their own children into the abyss in an endeavor to stay therising flood (Tan., Noah, 10).

Water was chosen as the instrument of destruction because man was made of dust, and water is the exact opposite of dust; because it was the first element to sing God's praises; because it enters into the composition of all that has life; because it recalled the haughty eye of the sinners (Midrash ha-Gadol, p. 152; Mek., Beshallah, 37b; Gen. R. xxxii.; Sanh. 108). The waters from above met those from beneath as though the former

were male and the latter female, their union producing new floods (Pirçe R. El. xxiii.).