



59 Broad Street · Freehold, New Jersey 07728
office@freeholdjc.org · (732) 462-0254 · www.freeholdjc.org

Parashah Noach

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Within one chapter of the Torah, the world goes from perfection to “chamas” violence in one millennium. It is violence that G-d sees as a more serious form of moral corruption than sexual promiscuity and incest.

The depth of these issues must be understood in how punishment is meted out. Is it G-d personally who is delivering the retribution? Or is it one of G-d’s agents bringing punishment? When G-d intervenes personally one can conclude that G-d distinguishes between the guilty and innocent even though the innocent may find themselves in an area destined for destruction. When G-d’s agent is authorized to destruct, the agent does so randomly. G-d understood that an agent would not be the right choice to bring on the flood because the random act would take Noah from the world and the earth would be unfit for human life. In creation, G-d argued with the angels as to whether create the human being or not for the angels knew, as G-d did, that the human species would become corrupt. G-d asks the angles how they would behave if they were in the same situation as mankind. The angels failed their test and became as debauched as the people around them, however, violence was not their main purpose.

Noah and his family had to be saved because G-d “liked” him, and Noah was righteous in his generation. The angel of death came forward demanding the right to kill everyone since everyone was violent and corrupt.

However, even the Angle of Death was not happy with Noah because Noah did not try to stop the violence. Therefore, G-d had to be the ultimate judge, and not a messenger, and show mercy in saving Noah and his family so they would reinhabit the world.

The covenant G-d makes is the combination of Justice and Mercy as the guiding principle of G-d’s supervision of affairs on earth from then on.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

