

Message: Worship: 2025-10-25

Parsha Noakh: Beresheit 6:9-11:32

This week's parshah is Parsha Noakh. There are tremendous lessons in this parshah that we will most definitely revisit in the future, but today I would like to go back just a little bit. The story of Noakh really begins at the end of last week's parshah, and that is where I want to dig in for this message today because what I see in this verse is the antithesis of what Hashem wants from us, and from the study of it I think we find many lessons for who we should be.

The verse reads:

Adonai saw that the people on earth were very wicked, that all the imaginings of their hearts were always of evil only.

Beresheit [Genesis 6:5] (CJB)

What is this phrase, 'all the imaginings of their hearts were always of evil only'?

Other English versions translate this verse:

- every intention of the thoughts of his heart (ESV)
- every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (KJV)
- every intent of the thoughts of their hearts (NASB)
- People thought evil, imagined evil—evil, evil, evil from morning to night. (MSG)

The Hebrew of this text is interesting as well.

וְכָל-יֵצֶר מַחְשְׁבֹת לִבּוֹ רָק רָק כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

Beresheit [Genesis] 6:5 (LHB)

And all inclination of thoughts of his heart only bad all day.

The people on earth were controlled by their yetzer hara, their evil inclination, and all their hopes and dreams were consumed by it. Everything they did was evil because of it. It says in verses 11 and 13 that the earth was filled with violence.

מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס

The land was filled with Hamas, violence. The people's hearts were full of evil, and they meditated on evil and out of that flowed evil. Consider this proverb from Solomon Melekh, King Solomon:

*The speech of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the speech of the wicked is a cover for violence.*

Mishlei [Proverbs 10:11] (CJB)

This dilemma provides us with a choice. Who do we worship?

Bob Dylan said it well, '**You're gonna have to serve somebody**'.

*Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody*

עבודה

AVODAH

Worship, Work, Service

The avodah of the people of the earth was evil and violent. That is what they served. Their worship and their work was Hamas.

This is what set the story of Noakh into motion. It was the worship of evil that brought about the judgement of Adonai, but Noakh found grace in the sight of Adonai

It says that:

Noakh was a man righteous and wholehearted; Noach walked with God.'

Beresheit [Genesis 6:9] (CJB)

Like the Shlomo Molekh, Yeshua Mashikhenu, *our messiah*, explained that what flows out of a person, both in speech and in deed, comes from their heart.

The good person produces good things from the store of good in his heart, while the evil person produces evil things from the store of evil in his heart. For his mouth speaks what overflows from his heart.

Lukas [Luke 6:45] (CJB)

What is in your heart flows out in your words and your actions. What we do matters, but the motivation of our hearts matters more. That was true for Noakh and it is true for us today. If we want our avodah to be acceptable to Adonai, we must first transform our hearts. That's where the issue actually lies. Think of these words of Yeshua.

*On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! **Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!**'*

Matityahu [Matthew] 7:21–23 (CJB)

Other translations use the words iniquity, evil, or wickedness. It is a quote from Psalms.

Get away from me, all you workers of evil!

Tehillim [Psalm 6:9] (CJB)

When I read this passage, what I am struck with is that the people in the days of Noakh and the people that David Melekh was referring to in the Psalm were doing “bad” things (hamas- violence, rak ra- only evil, aven- iniquity), but these ‘many people’ that Yeshua is referring to were doing arguably “good” things in His name. Yet they are told to get away because Yeshua does not know them; which infers that **they did not know Him**. They were serving themselves, *look at all these things we did*, but they were not doing it in service of the Lord. They did not know Him because their hearts had not been transformed.

In The Talmud Tractate Ta'anit 2a they are discussing the prayers for rain on Sh'moni Atseret, and they quote Devarim 11:13 to teach why the work (prayer) must be accompanied by the heart (faith). It says:

“To love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart” (Deuteronomy 11:13). Which is the service of God that is performed in the heart? You must say that this is referring to prayer.

Taanit.2a

עֲבוֹדָה שֶׁהִיא בְּלֵב

Service, worship of Him in your heart. The transformation of our hearts comes from walking with God like Noakh. When you are walking with Him, everything you do can become worship.

Whatever work you do, put yourself into it, as those who are serving not merely other people, but the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 (CJB)

Community Worship

As I said earlier, if we want our avodah to be acceptable to Adonai, we must first transform our hearts. This is true for us individually, and it is true for us communally.

I spend a lot of time thinking about what we as a community do here at Or HaOlam. Some of that is practical because I am one of the people who has to get things done. Getting all of this done can be a lot, as it is for those of you who also serve, but it is our avodah. It is our worship. It is our practical service of Adonai in the community. What occupies my mind is not the practical, tactical stuff but the strategic and the philosophical.

Why do we do what we do how we do it?

That's a big, open-ended sort of question. For sake of time, let's focus this morning on our Shabbat service. First, we view our whole day as the service, and it is made up of many parts. Shabbat starts on Friday night as we meet in homes to separate Shabbat from the common days with candles and blessings and songs and a meal.

The next morning in community, we begin with liturgy and prayer, a time of corporate singing and music, reading and a teaching from the torah, and a message from the Rabbi. This is followed by eating and fellowshiping together as a community which then leads into times of corporate study and prayer.

All of this is worship. All of this is done in service of Adonai.

All of this. כל זה

There is nothing we do here that is inconsistent with scriptural worship.

We are a synagogue. We are a Torah observant community, and we are constantly trying to refine what we do to help teach and to encourage people to enter into a walk with God that is consistent with Torah. It is important to create a Jewish environment for worship, a place that respects and enters into the traditions. We endeavor to restore the identity of Yeshua HaMashiakh and to strip away from our avodah all the trappings of non-Biblical culture so that we can reveal the messiah in truth. We are trying to reflect the light of Yeshua, Or HaOlam, into the world. That is what we endeavor to do here at Or HaOlam and throughout the world through Messianic Judaism.

What about the cultural aspect of worship? Is our worship here culturally acceptable? Some of what we do is decidedly American in character, but **we** are all decidedly American. Hashem has placed us in this community today for the purpose of avodah.

So, our minhag will never align perfectly with the minhag of other synagogues or other traditions. You may be thinking, what is *minhag*? I'm glad you asked. Minhag is an accepted tradition or group of traditions in Judaism. Minhag is the acceptable custom of the community. The community culture. The community culture varies dramatically within Judaism. All of the other traditions present in normative Judaism reflect the values and traditions of their rabbi in their priorities and traditions, even their dress.

We are no different.

We don't know how Yeshua dressed or what sort of hat he wore (arguably because that was not what mattered to Him or his talmidim), but we do know what he prioritized. He prioritized the motivation of the heart.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before others to be seen by them; otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matityahu [Matthew] 6:1 (TLV)

The messiah is a great disrupter that places us out of step in many ways with the greater Jewish community (just as it does with the church community), and I frankly think that is something that will only change when messiah comes again and we are all truly walking in His ways. Then we will all be following the way, the truth and the life of Yeshua in complete unity together.

Modern Worship

What about all of the modernity we find present in our expressions of worship? Some synagogues are a lot like us, but many are not. We have guitars and microphones and speakers and drums and a really nice LED projector. Cantors and Rabbis with iPads. Air conditioning, heat, electricity, pants.

Pants are actually thoroughly modern.

Should we eliminate everything that was not present by 70 CE when the 2nd temple was destroyed? Should we eliminate... pants?

In one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the one called Community Rule, it has the following section:

*I will sing with knowledge, and all my music shall be for the glory of God.
(My) lyre (and) my harp shall sound for His holy order, and I will tune the pipe of my lips to His right measure.
I will open my mouth in songs of thanksgiving.*

So even the Essenes, legendary for their strict and meticulous observance, valued music, what to them would have been modern music, as one of the vital forms of worship.

I have a short clip here discussing the Third Temple. The discussion dealt primarily with the burning of the red heifer, a subject of some controversy, but this part does key in on the essence of some of what we are digging into today. Chaim Malespin is asking Rabbi Berkowitz about what an official red heifer ceremony would be like.

{Chaim Malespin clip}

Marshall stacks in the Third Temple. Is that what you envisioned? Fun fact, I have a guitar that was made in 1957. It is 68 yrs young. I wouldn't call it ancient, but it is hardly modern. The first electric guitar was built in 1890, 135 years ago, and you can clearly trace the history of the guitar back through time to the early stringed instruments like the kinnor, AKA the lyre.

{Lyre played before a Canaanite king}

1350-1150 BCE, The artwork is a portion of Megiddo Ivory (LB II), an ivory plaque found at Megiddo. This is the closest representation that we have to the lifetime of David Melekh.

{kinnor image}

The kinnor, the 10 stringed instrument David Melekh played, was a thoroughly modern instrument in his time. What Rabbi Berkowitz is saying here is not out of line.

We all have many facets to our lives, and we all have the capacity to worship. I am a musician and a singer, but that does not make me a worshipper. I am also a student and a teacher and a shepherd and a sheep and a husband and a father and a son. I am a friend. I am a designer and an engineer and an artist. My life has been filled with a tremendous variety of pursuits, and I have been blessed in them. Lots of roles and hobbies and hats. All this is not what makes me a worshipper.

All of this. כל זה

What makes me a worshipper of Adonai is that I try to do all of this for the Lord. Whatever I am doing, I try to do for Him. I try to walk with God like Noakh, and I try to serve Him with my whole heart.

In Hebrew there are many, **MANY** words for worship. One compiled list I found had 57 unique words used in scripture to refer to worship of Adonai. 57 unique words, not the same word in different tenses. These words describe bowing and standing in prayer, weeping, contemplation, study, shouting, singing, blowing horns, playing stringed instruments, drums, dancing, eating, fellowship, etc.

All of this. כל זה

I will let you in on a not very well kept secret. Not every form of worship resonates with my spirit. Not everything appeals to me. Some of it I enjoy, and some of it is a complete and total drag. Some of it comes naturally, and some of it does not. I don't actually like everything. However, as evidenced by the variety of worship in scripture, it is not about me.

When I say 'resonate' what I am referring to is not some hippy-dippy mumbo jumbo. Quick music lesson. Every note has a unique resonant frequency. Some notes resonate well together, and some do not. Some are harmonious, but others are dissonant.

Hashem, in His wisdom, created humanity in a bizarre and diverse and beautiful way. We are not homogenous, and our worship will not be homogenous either. However, we can be united as a community in our avodah of Adonai. Each of us serving Adonai

and loving each other. Remember, that is how the world is supposed to know that we are talmidim Yeshua. Our love for each other.

Every aspect of worship here at Or HaOlam may not be for you, but it is for someone. It helps someone who might be different from you to worship *Adonai Their God, Adonai Eloheihem*, with all of their heart. Their heart might be a little different from your heart. The important thing is that they are worshipping God spiritually and truly.

But the time is coming—indeed, it's here now—when the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshipping him. God is spirit; and worshippers must worship him spiritually and truly.”

Yochanon [John] 4:23-24 (CJB)

We as a community need to understand that Adonai Eloheinu, *Adonai Our God*, made us all different so that we can recognize and serve Him in our differences. The important thing is that **WE** are worshipping God spiritually and truly.

Closing

Chaverim, remember what Bob Dylan said,

You're gonna have to serve somebody

Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord

But you're gonna have to serve somebody

In the end, the only thing we really have the power to control is ourselves. When the world is filled with Hamas, When the world is dark, when your situation looks grim: choose to worship Adonai Eloheinu.

What is our inclination?

The inclination of the people in Noakh's day was evil. Our inclination is to serve the Lord because of our love for the Lord, and we demonstrate that in what we do.

Like I said earlier, what is in our hearts flows out in our words and actions. This was true for Noakh and it is true for us today. If we want our avodah to be acceptable to Adonai, we must first transform our hearts.

Let the word of Messiah dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16 (TLV)

Like the shaliakh Ya'akov ***we show our faith by our works***. We show our faith in our service, our worship, our avodah. Full of the Word with gratitude in our hearts.

If we let the word of Messiah, which is the whole Torah (kol ha torah) dwell in us richly and worship spiritually and truly. If we do all this, kol zeh. If we walk with God, we will be like Noakh, righteous and wholehearted, and we will find grace with God. In the olam haba we will be known by God.

Resources

- Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, J.A. Smith
- Babylonian Talmud: <https://www.sefaria.org/Taanit.2a.11>
- Hebrew Worship Words: <http://justworship.com/hebrew-words/>
- Real Israel Podcast: <https://youtu.be/VqW6SITc25E?si=swmZX1vfyBqRdrg>
- Who Invented the Electric Guitar: <https://www.sweetwater.com/insync/who-invented-the-electric-guitar/>
- The Complete Jewish Bible
- Tree of Life Version
- Lexham Hebrew Bible
- Hebrew New Testament
- Kinnor: <https://luthieros.com/product/the-lyre-of-king-david-har-meggido-top-quality-handcrafted-musical-instrument/>