

“...righteous before me...”

It is an awful and pressing thought: if God told us that He was to devastate the whole world tomorrow, and would only save a few who are righteous, would we be amongst those given refuge? In the entire world, only Noah and his family had God's protection! Therefore, it is a very reasonable thing to examine ones' self and others, to see if we are righteous. Are you righteous? Or, do you just think you are? Am I righteous? Or, am I deluding myself?

In scripture we are given some guidelines and can, with all humility, look at ourselves and at others, to see if we show the signs of being righteous. Often, angry people retort that their salvation and righteousness is “between me and God”. They resent having to prove their elect condition to others. This is because they cannot offer anything as proof of their claimed saved state, though scripture tells us to be ready, with all humility, to show anyone who asks, what our condition is.

Noah was righteous and he was saved from the deluge. The proof of his condition before God was in his life and beliefs. As Christians our faith and standards must be transparent to all. Visibly, we must be holy and true. There should not be a reason for others to ask “Are you saved?”... because our lives should openly prove it.

It is a sad fact that very often I have to probe a person's responses, because I suspect that the words they use to describe their claimed salvation do not seem to come over properly. Yes, I make allowances for language differences and that most folk have no real experience in discussions or putting over their view. But, very often, my suspicions are proved to be well-founded. And those who refuse to discuss their salvation are top of the suspicion list!

All Christians should expect other Christians to be open and honest, and to give a good report of their claimed status before God. And their words and actions should match their claims. Sure, there will be ‘blips’ here and there in their lives, when errors or sin come to the fore, but, overall, life, action, beliefs and claims should come together as an harmonious whole.

Noah's life was transparently holy. There were no hidden sins or secret errors. God saw him as he truly was and said that he was righteous. I pray to God that I am like Noah in this respect – I know I sin and I know I make mistakes, but I must always run the race and be righteous. My

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heart must be true even if I sometimes outwardly fail to reflect what I ought to be.

We should note that God cannot change His mind. When He utters chilling words, He will not take them back. It means that even if the whole population of the world began to observe God's requirements before the Flood came, God would not have removed the judgement and they would still have died. No man should trifle with God's commands and word. What He says, He means, and we all do well to remember it.

Verse 1

1.

“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”

Jehovah spoke to Noah direct, using actual speech, and instructed him and his family to enter the ark. It was now time to become safe. God gave Noah the reason why he and his family, alone, would be saved – out of the entire world only Noah was observably righteous, tsaddiyq – justified and acceptable. His character and conduct in life perfectly reflected his inward beliefs, tsadaq.

Interestingly, God does not say that his whole family had been righteous, but only says “for thee have I seen”. It seems, then, that God saved the whole family because of Noah's personal righteousness, and not because everyone in the family was equally righteous. Such mercy is God's prerogative and does not extend to personal salvation from sin and its penalty. See how a single righteous person can save a whole family from destruction! Never underestimate the mercy you can attract from God by your obedience.

Verses 2-6

1.

“Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

2.

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Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

3.

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

4.

And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.”

It is clear from the words of verse 2 that mankind had previously been told which animals were ‘clean’ and which were not. Noah had just seven days to gather into the ark all the animals that God had commanded to appear in the area for the purpose.

Animals not considered to be clean went in as a pair (male and female). Clean animals went in by sevens. The animals were divided into clean and unclean for ceremonial reasons, *tahowr*, and some were also clean in a physical and health sense, *taher*

. The ‘beasts’ in the text refer to four legged animals.

Why were clean animals taken on board in sevens and unclean taken in pairs? The text does not explain the difference. Nine animals are mentioned in the Bible as suitable for food (clean) – deer, gazelle, fallow deer, addax, bison, oryx, wild goat, wild ox and ibex. Today only the gazelle and ibex exist in Israel, but in the time of Noah all kinds of animals lived in the area of his home, many of which are not extinct. Some, but not all, domestic animals were clean, and of those that were clean, the fat of some could not be used in sacrifice. Only domestic animals could be used as sacrifices. Wild animals could not, though they could be used for food.

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It might seem from scripture that the distinction between clean and unclean was clear, but this is not the case. There have been long-standing debates about certain animals, as to whether or not they fall into the domestic or wild category. Thus, early Hebrew religious leaders could not decide finally if a dog was wild or not. The debates went on so that the Jews did not eat or sacrifice the wrong animal.

The wild ox, for example, was the subject of debate, because scholars did not know if it had once been domestic, and then become wild, or if it had always been wild – the law being different for both categories. A similar debate arose much later, over the water buffalo. Though sheep, goats and cattle are accepted as domestic (permitted), certain others are not – horse, ass, mule, camel and pig. In Israel there are presently 350 species of birds and most of them are considered to be 'clean'.

The possible reason, then, why clean beasts were taken on board in sevens may be to do with both food and sacrifice. They would have to be more numerous because they were put to use, whereas the others were not used for either food or ceremony. Note that birds went on in sevens. This confirms the fact that most birds were considered to be clean and permissible.

God warned that the deluge would occur in seven days time. When God uttered the word 'rain', *matar*, it must have seemed very strange to Noah for until that time rain was not known. The rain would last for forty days and forty nights. The word 'forty' means what it says – 40. When the rain came, it would destroy every 'living substance' from the face of the earth. That is, every *y@quwm*
- everything that exists and everything living.

As there is no qualifying remark to say otherwise, this literally means the whole earth, and not just a local area. The only qualifying remark is "that I have made", which indicates everything God had made on earth, including not just animals, but also inanimate objects such as hills, etc. (We are not sure if there were only hills, or if mountains already existed, too).

Straight away, Noah did everything commanded by God. It is probable that God gave instructions extra to those found in Genesis, but are not recorded. Noah obeyed everything said to him... after all, his very life and the future of the world were at stake.

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Noah was 600 years of age when the “flood of waters was upon the earth.” in itself, this does not tell us if he was 600 when the flood started, when it was occurring, or when it finished. But, it does not matter – at worst, we would only be out by a few months. The word ‘flood’ is mabbuwl, meaning deluge, and its root, mayim, figuratively speaks of danger and violence. The word ‘earth’ in verse 7 is not the same as ‘earth’ in verse 6. It is erets, and more succinctly refers to the whole earth and its inhabitants. It is true that it can also refer to a territory or district, but that would not fit the whole context.

Verses 7-16

1.

“And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

2.

Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

3.

There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

4.

And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

5.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

6.

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

7.

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In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

8.

They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

9.

And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

10.

And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.”

We do not know if the family joined the animals on board the ark well in time, or at the very last moment. We only know that they went on board and waited for the deluge. They waited with an intense anticipation, as everyone else remained outside the now fixed and waterproofed door. Inside were Noah and his family, the clean and unclean animals, the birds, and “everything that creepeth”, including mice, rats, and insects.

The text of verse 9 does not contradict the previous texts referring to animals going in by sevens, but simply restricts itself to pairs – male and female. These are the ‘twos’ spoken of in verse 9.

As they waited, when the seven days had passed, the waters started to come. This is dated as the “six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day.” We cannot tell with certainty what this month actually was, but we do know it was 17 days into that month. It may have been the later devised month of the Jews, or the original month, whatever that was.

We often imagine that the deluge began with a few drops of rain, gentle at first and getting

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harder. This, however, is not the sense given in verse 11. In that verse we get the sense of a massive and immediate deluge, with such force as to be terrifying and without any gentle warning: “the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

This means that all the water that previously formed a stable mantle around the earth for almost 2,000 years, and all the water that was locked below the surface of the earth, was suddenly thrown up and down at the same time! The ‘fountains’ are springs, but not in the gentle usual sense. They came from below the abyss or ocean floor, t@howm, which was ‘broken up’, baqa – split, ripped up, torn, rent open or burst open.

Remember how deep the oceans are – the ‘springs’ had to be enormous to push upwards, huge gushers that burst through the floor of the earth with the force of volcanos. They made the ocean level rise rapidly – the tsunami experienced in the Pacific in the year 2005 was nothing compared to the deluge! However, see how terrifying the tsunami was and how swiftly it brought destruction! The gushers in Genesis came from the whole ocean floor, causing immense tsunamis of unimaginable proportions and ruin.

So, the water mantle simply dropped in all its enormous weight and power, whilst the waters under the sea ripped through huge splits – water falling down and water pushing upward. It is this immeasurable force that made the mountains we see today, the mighty rivers, and the subsided parts of the earth. The end result was an earth surface that did not resemble what was originally created. It was an earth shattered by God’s own hand, a punishment for the sins of the world, which began with Adam and Eve’s fall. This mighty deluge lasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and it completely flooded the whole earth. Only the ark was visible above the waters.

The narrative then returns to the persons who entered the ark – Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, Noah’s wife, and their sons’ three wives. There were also beasts “after his kind”, including cattle and creeping things and birds. All after his kind. This tells us that kinds (species) were selected and not many of the same kind. If there were sub-species at that time, they did not enter the ark, as sub-species are already derived from a main species.

They all entered the ark as commanded by God, through the shepherding of Noah. “And the LORD shut him in” – God made sure that Noah and all the inhabitants of the ark were safe, cagar. You might think that the door in the side must have been under immense pressure from the water, but, even if it was, God made it safe.

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Unbelievers think that God's demands are like a prison, but the ark was a place of refuge. If Noah wanted his freedom he could have remained outside the ark, to be suddenly killed by waters of unimaginable scale. Is that rational? No, just as God shut up Noah for his own safety, so God shuts us up in Christ, for the same reason. When we obey God we remain safe and all that we receive are benefits. When we insist on our own ways, we do not know the peace of God and do not have the benefits that are ours when we live in harmony with our Creator.

Verses 17-20

1.

"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

2.

And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

3.

And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

4.

Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered."

The waters came down, and up, and this mayhem lasted for 40 days and nights. All living creatures and men were killed on the first day, such was the appalling violence. But, the waters continued to rise for a month and a half. The ark was floating on top of it all, no doubt buffeted all ways, but kept safe. We do not know where the ark floated altogether, nor do we truly know where it started from.

We can assume that though they knew God was protecting them, the commotion and violence

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all around them must have made the family terrified. How can any man or woman not be terrified by God's wrath and power? Remember that what they saw and experienced was not God's personal power, but only the power He unleashed through natural elements – His 'raw' power would be too much for any creature to bear and would have been utterly and finally crushing!

We are told that all the high hills were covered. Does this mean hills that were originally created by God in the beginning, or hills that were forced upwards by the weight of water and the bursting of the sea floor? We cannot tell. The word 'high', gaboahh – tall, lofty, suggests that they may indeed have been mountains, rather than rolling hills... but, that is only my guess. The later use of the word 'mountains', har (from harar, meaning to loom up), seems to confirm this.

At any rate all the hills were covered completely by water, over the whole earth. Thus, the world reverted back to its original pre-shaped time, before God brought the land up through the sea into one place. The mantle of water above the whole earth had just come down as a whole mass, so what came down was what God had originally put up into the skies.

"Fifteen cubits upward"... the water covered the highest mountains by this much, about 23 feet. As the highest mountain today is about five miles high, we can deduce, very roughly, that the original water mantle must have been up to five miles in depth, all around the earth. We know that after the Flood there was 'normal' rain, and that water slowly subsided – but where did it all go? Most of it must have gone back underneath the earth, leaving what was left to evaporate and form clouds, and to form new rivers, and possibly raise the sea level everywhere. Again, this is an educated guess, but it seems reasonable.

Verses 21-24

1.

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

2.

All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

3.

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And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

4.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.”

When the Flood came, all living creatures not in the ark died. A small tsunami rips men's arms away from trees and sucks them out of buildings. Imagine the power of trillions of tons of water, coming all at once, tearing the earth apart, throwing around materials, and drowning, all at the same time! Death must have been almost instant.

As has already been said, even inanimate objects were destroyed. Only Noah, his family, and the chosen animals, lived. When the waters stopped raining and gushing upward, they remained as a whole-earth sea for another 110 days, the total time of Flood being 150 days, or about 5 months.

(Why 150 days, when everything had already been killed? Possibly, it was an extra-reminder that the waters came by God's command and would leave by the same command: He controls, not nature, nor man's desire).

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