

## Noah

The portion of Noah relates the story of the terrifying deluge. The entire world was submerged under water and all living things and the earth's vegetation was destroyed with it. Tradition has it that a full twelve inches of the topsoil of the earth was also washed away in the deluge, causing cataclysmic changes in the earth's subsequent environment and produce.

What caused this universal catastrophe? The Torah tells it in concise terms: "And the earth was corrupted before G-d and was filled with violence."<sup>1</sup> There were no redeeming factors to rescue the inhabitants, which also included the animals and fowl slated for annihilation. Only Noah and his family were spared the world's fate, because, as the Torah states, "For only you have I seen righteous before me in this generation."<sup>2</sup>

Our Sages comment that the overriding cause of the deluge was that the people living in that era did not heed the most basic laws of the human race, as handed down to them through ten preceding generations, from Adam himself. And thus we find that the great *Rambam*<sup>3</sup> expounds on the Talmudic principle that Adam and his descendants, including all the inhabitants of the world today, were commanded by G-d to observe the following laws known as the Seven Laws of the offspring of Noah: Forbidding 1) Idolatry 2) Blasphemy 3) Murder 4) Immorality 5) Robbery 6) Eating part of an animal while still alive, and 7) Calling for the establishment of courts of law and order.

Because the people abused these basic, common sense laws, addressed to humanity at large, the world suffered its cardinal penalty—utter annihilation.

The lesson of the Deluge and its aftermath is as relevant to our generation, as it was 4000 years ago. When citizens of the world ignore the rudimentary rules and regulations of civilization, they must perforce be destroyed. The history of mankind during these past four millenium, has actually been a replay of ancient and pre and post deluvian times.

A total rejection of these Divinely ordained laws established for humanity has brought about eras of untold tyranny, atrocities, despotism, enslavement and bereavement.

Indescribable suffering for the hordes of inhabitants drawn into the vortex of these vicious cycles of rulers who were atheists and self-styled deities, has been the sum total of recorded history.

Events in the past half century have borne ample proof to our assertion. Millions of people killed in the mania of two world wars, six million innocent men, women and children exterminated in hideous fashion at the hands of an evil tyrant and demented fascist leader, countless millions living in prison conditions in Eastern Europe under the communists, an Arab world where poverty, filth and disease are a way of life for the many millions living in the orbit of oil bloated sheiks, kings, princes and half-crazed dictators. These are but a small fraction of the sum total of the suffering endured by human beings living in this century.

Could such terrible conditions ever have evolved, spawning the seeds of grief, misfortune and tragedy for mankind, if human beings would have but observed the simple seven laws promulgated for them? We are today witness to world misfortune, aided and abetted by the refusal of humanity to abide by their regulations.

For the Jewish people it is a different story altogether. We have been granted a holy Torah containing 613 Mitzvos. We have been appointed by the A-mighty to serve as a light to the nations and to teach and guide them in the proper performance of their obligations. The Jew has always been the guardian of the word of G-d and, through his personal life style predicated upon the practice of Torah, he was able to outlive and outlast his enemies and detractors.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Bereishith 6:11
2. Ibid. 7:1
3. Hilchoth Melachim 9:1