

# THE WORLD IS A SYMPHONY

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

Everyone knows the story of Noah's Ark, and every culture has some form of documentation of "The Deluge". We mostly treat it as a legend, with a nice way to teach our children the names of various animals. It finds its way into our culture through art forms depicting the ark and the pairs of animals marching up the ramp into their interim home. The student of Torah knows that there is more to it than just a quaint story from antiquity.

When G-d created the world He placed man at the helm of creation. He gave us the ability to "rule" over the world. The rulership the Torah is talking about is not domination, but rather leadership. It's a major responsibility which was placed into our hands. G-d withdrew control (in a limited way) and left the world subject to the deeds of humankind.

This idea has been illustrated in terms of the world being a symphony orchestra with all of the various instruments playing in harmony. Mankind is the conductor, and everyone looks to him. When the conductor leads as he should, the orchestra works in exquisite harmony. However, should the conductor err, the potential exists for the entire orchestra to descend into the abyss of horrible dissonance. Then, needless to say, the orchestra loses its appeal.

This is the theme of the story of Noach. The conductor, humankind, acted irresponsibly. Anarchy reigned supreme. Might made right, and society broke down. On a spiritual level mankind sank, and all of the Earth which was created on his behalf sank with him. However, there was still a small pocket of sanity. It existed with Noach and his family. For that he was saved, and given the privilege of being the Father of "Mankind Act II".

In our parsha we have another familiar story known as the Tower of Babel. Among the many commentaries on this cryptic event, there are those who say the building of the tower was in order to wage a rebellion against G-d. The question which resounds is WHY? Why was the generation of the flood destroyed, and the generation who built this tower merely dispersed? The answer resounds even louder. The power of unity. The difference is clear. During the years before the flood, society broke down, and disunity reigned. Contrast that to the generation about which the Torah states "And all the land was of one language and unity prevailing" (Genesis 11:1). Since there was peace and unity among the participants in the building of the tower, they merited to stay alive and just be dispersed.

A great Rabbi was once asked to predict the outcome of the war between Napoleon's army and the

Russians. His answer was "I'm no prophet, but I'll tell you a story." "A rich man riding in a magnificent carriage became mired in the mud on the poorly paved roads. A farmer driving an old rickety wagon pulled by three ponies offered his assistance. The rich man scornfully asked 'how can your ponies do what my beautiful horses could not achieve?' Calmly, the farmer asked 'Where are your horses from?' 'Why these are bought from the greatest stables!' 'That explains it,' said the farmer. 'Your horses are unrelated. Each one fights for domination over the other three. When you hit one the others rejoice in his misfortune and don't help in the task. My ponies are brothers, and they all pull together!' Humbly, the rich man watched the ponies pull his coach out of the mud." The rabbi continued. "Napoleon's army is composed of many different ethnic groups, while the Russian soldiers are all brothers and fighting for their homeland. There is no question in my mind that the unity in the Russian army will help them in their battles." We all know how that story ended.

The value of peace and unity are one of the many relevant lessons we learn from a parsha which is so well known, yet so misunderstood. They are achievable goals which we should all place at the top of our priorities.

Good Shabbos!

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