

LAW AND ORDER

by Rabbi Dovid Green

"And the earth became corrupt before G-d, and the land was filled with robbery" (Genesis 6:11). Our sages (Sanhedrin 108a) observe that the sin which earned the punishment of the flood was robbery. Just as it states: "And G-d said to Noach 'the end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with robbery'..." (Genesis 6:13). The scriptures also reveal that the generation before the flood was involved deeply in immoral behavior as well. How can it be that their punishment was fixed as a result of robbery? Can that compare to adultery, bestiality, and all other forms of immorality?

In the ethical work "Chachmas HaMatzpon" this question is addressed. He connects the behavior of the pre-deluge generation to lack of order and accountability. Regarding order, be it social order or otherwise, it can be said that without it the world can not function. All of the fundamental elements of the universe follow a strict order. If the solar system would not follow a specific order and each celestial body stay on its own path, even momentarily, everything would be destroyed. This is one of literally countless examples. Everything depends on order, and it is of great importance to G-d.

This observation leads us to the next step. From it we can see the value of humankind when they choose to conduct themselves by the dictates of law and order. We come to this conclusion by way of an analogy.

A fellow passes by a hall where many preparations are being made for a great feast. He sees the quality of the work and the attention being paid to every detail. He observes the finery. He notices the effort given to how each food is prepared; which dish, and which utensils. He takes note of the color scheme. From all that he observes he surmises that something of great importance is in the making. This feast must be for kings and noblemen. These kind of preparations are not made except for the most discerning people; people who can appreciate every nuance and every detail of the effort put into the preparation and execution of this great feast.

Just as the level of preparation for a feast leads us to draw conclusions about it, so too regarding order. The order that exists in the universe in every aspect from the minutest to greatest testifies to its value and importance. Consequently, one who conducts himself within the confines of order is connecting with the underlying theme of the creation.

This is our springboard for understanding why robbery brought the creation to destruction. When one can appreciate the chaos which financial dishonesty creates in the world, one can draw conclusions about the destruction immorality perpetrates. Since the pre-deluge generation did not

succeed in drawing the correct conclusions, they forfeited their existence. This is the lesson which to this day is just as relevant as it was then.

Good Shabbos!

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