

Comments on Moses 8

With chapter 8 we transition from Enoch's history to Noah's and the conflict between good and evil culminates in the great Deluge. While the text pauses for some history (v. 1-11), it returns to the theme of conflict with Noah calling all men to repentance (v. 12-19). They treat Noah's preaching lightly and say they are just like their fathers were (v. 20-22), and Noah says if they were like their fathers then they would repent and be baptized (v. 23-24). Noah is greatly grieved for the wickedness of mankind (v. 25-26). While Noah and his sons walked with God, the rest of mankind became so corrupt they had to be destroyed from off the face of the earth (v. 27-30).

1 AND all the days of Enoch were four hundred and thirty years. 2 And it came to pass that Methuselah, the son of Enoch, was not taken, that the covenants of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to Enoch; for he truly covenanted with Enoch that Noah should be of the fruit of his loins. 3 And it came to pass that Methuselah prophesied that from his loins should spring all the kingdoms of the earth (through Noah), and he took glory unto himself. 4 And there came forth a great famine into the land, and the Lord cursed the earth with a sore curse, and many of the inhabitants thereof died. 5 And it came to pass that Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begat Lamech; 6 And Methuselah lived, after he begat Lamech, seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begat sons and daughters; 7 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

v1-7 The patriarchy of Enoch gives way to the patriarchy of Methuselah. While a great deal is said of both Enoch and Noah, very little is said about Methuselah, suggesting he did not accomplish much worthy of note.

v2 This is why Enoch was so interested in obtaining a promise from the Lord so as to guarantee him to preserve a remnant of Noah's lineage, because it is Enoch's lineage as well, cp. 7:49-52.

v3 "and he took glory unto himself", apparently Methuselah sinned in pridefulness, which is why he wasn't translated along with the rest of Enoch's Zion.

v4 Famine is a common curse, cp. Lev. 26:19-20.

8 And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and begat a son, 9 And he called his name Noah, saying: This son shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of

the ground which the Lord hath cursed. 10 And Lamech lived, after he begat Noah, five hundred and ninety-five years, and begat sons and daughters; 11 And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

v8-11 The next patriarchy is noted, and the birth of Noah as well. Lamech foresees Noah's role in cleansing the earth of wickedness such that the Lord will remove the curse on the land and again make it fertile.

v9 "called his name Noah saying: This son shall comfort us", the Hebrew "noah" means "rest" or "relief". The traditional interpretation of this is based upon the reference to the cursed ground appearing in this verse. In Genesis 9:20-21 we are informed Noah is the "soil's husband" or a "man of the soil" (Hebrew: ish `adamah), and he is apparently the first viticulturalist. These two in combination suggest Noah was quite the innovative agrarian. The traditional interpretation goes on in a slightly more speculative fashion to suggest that Noah invented the first plow. All of this is interesting, but the more important point is after the flood the curse on the land is lifted and Noah becomes a successful agriculturalist.

12 And Noah was four hundred and fifty years old, and begat Japheth; and forty-two years afterward he begat Shem of her who was the mother of Japheth, and when he was five hundred years old he begat Ham. 13 And Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God.

14 And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of men saw that those daughters were fair, and they took them wives, even as they chose. 15 And the Lord said unto Noah: The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men, for they will not hearken to my voice.

16 And it came to pass that Noah prophesied, and taught the things of God, even as it was in the beginning. 17 And the Lord said unto Noah: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he shall know that all flesh shall die; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years; and if men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them. 18 And in those days there were giants on the earth, and they sought Noah to take away his life; but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him. 19 And the Lord ordained Noah after his own order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch.

v12-19 Noah has three sons, all of whom are as righteous as he is and they all walk with God (v. 12-13). Unfortunately, there were others in Noah's family who were not zealous for God, and they went after the world (v. 14-15). Noah testifies of and

teaches the gospel (v. 16), but the Spirit has abandoned these people and they are set for destruction (v. 17). The Nephilim sought to murder Noah, but the Lord protected him from them (v. 18). The Lord ordains Noah even as Enoch was ordained (v. 19).

v12 This verse suggests Ham had a different mother than did Shem and Lamech. This may be important when interpreting Gen. 9:22-23.

v13 All of Noah's sons were exceptionally righteous, cp. v. 27 where they are explicitly mentioned by name. This becomes a pivotal point in the Gen. 9 account of Ham's debauchery.

v14 This is the ever-popular "sons of God and daughters of men" passage that is generally interpreted by Judaism and Christianity alike to be a folk mythology about angels copulating with mortal women. There is nothing in the Hebrew requiring such a fanciful reading, as the phrase is "benei ha elohim". There is one prominent dissenter, a Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai vehemently protests the traditional reading and insists the reading should be akin to "the sons of nobles" (Genesis Rabbah 26:8).

Setting the traditional interpretation aside, a number of other passages say very much the same thing, but in a much less ambiguous fashion. All of these indicate the issue at hand is religious men being tempted by worldly women and abandoning their religion to pursue lusts of the flesh, cp. Gen. 24:3, Gen. 38:2, Exod. 34:16, Deut. 7:3-4, Josh. 23:12, Judges 3:16, Hosea 4:11-14, Mal. 2:11. Despite all of this evidence the traditional interpretation remains popular.

v17 "his days shall be an hundred and twenty years", the Lord limits man's life span from several hundred to just over a hundred. This appears to be an effort to make humans more aware of their mortality and hopefully more humble, as death became a more evident part of life.

"And if men do not repent, I will send the floods upon them", this account varies considerably from the Genesis 6:3 account. There the text makes no hint that the decreased life span was a precursor to the flood designed to get them to repent. And if they didn't repent, then the Deluge would follow. The Genesis account presents the two events as following each other but not connected.

It is interesting to note the Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary states on Gen. 6:9, "rabbinic lore supplements the text by having Noah warn his fellow men of impending disaster and call them to repentance".

v18 "there were giants", the Hebrew term is "nephilim" and is obscure in meaning. The root n-f-l suggests "fallen ones" which by context would be referring to the sons of God who abandoned God for the daughters of men. The Nephilim seeking Noah's life makes more sense in the light of them being deliberately rebellious.

However, if one reads this as though there really were "giants", following the traditional interpretation, then perhaps King Og (cf. Deut. 3:11) was typical of them and they were about 12 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Either some of these giants survived the flood or it was a matter of genetics as there were "giants" both before and after. As Og is identified as one of the last giants during Moses' time and then Goliath appears somewhat later, that suggests it was matter of genetics. There is also a reference to the people of Anak being giants as well, but that account is clearly a gross exaggeration, cf. Num. 13:33.

v19 Compare 6:67.

20 And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent; but they hearkened not unto his words; 21 And also, after that they had heard him, they came up before him, saying: Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown. And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah. 22 And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually.

23 And it came to pass that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words; 24 Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not.

v20-24 Noah calls upon all men to repent, but they ignore him (v. 20). Their rationalization is they are just as their fathers were and are blessed and prospered and mighty (v. 21), so what do they have to repent of? They say and do all of this as God witnesses it all (v. 2). Despite this, Noah continues on preaching and follows their line of logic to point out to them their original fathers, implying Adam and Enoch, repented and were baptized, and they ought to be like those fathers. If they do not repent, Noah warns them of their imminent destruction. But, they still ignore him (v. 24).

v21 These rebellious men say, "You are no better than us, we are prospering, and everything continues same as it ever has" in response to Noah's preaching.

v22 The wickedness of the people was entirely pervasive, necessitating an equally pervasive means of destroying the wicked. Hence the flood.

v23-24 Noah continues preaching to them despite their apathy, but this time he warns them of the impending flood if they fail to repent. This is absent from the Genesis account.

25 And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart. 26 And the Lord said: I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Noah that I have created them, and that I have made them; and he hath called upon me; for they have sought his life.

27 And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 28 The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence. 29 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. 30 And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.

v25-30 The conclusion of Noah's preaching. With Noah's preaching being futile and him being the target of assassins, the Lord is left with no choice but to destroy the wicked from the face of the earth.

Note the text follows an A-B-A-B pattern, as follows:

- A - (v. 25) Noah's grief over the corruption of mankind
- B - (v. 26) Lord says He will destroy all flesh and explains why
- A - (v. 27) Noah's godly walk
- B - (v. 28-29) Lord says He will destroy all flesh and explains why

Noah's charity (v. 25) and righteousness (v. 27) are contrasted with the condition of men in general and this is used to explain why Noah and his family are spared and the rest are destroyed.

Note this is the first time the Lord has resorted to capital punishment, as far as the Scriptures document, and immediately

after the Flood the Lord codifies capital punishment for application between men, cf. Gen. 9:5-6. Prior to this the Lord did not execute or require the execution of murderers, e.g., Cain and Lamech.

Take this in combination with the shorter limit the Lord has imposed on the life span of man (cf. v. 17), and it is plain He intends to use mortality as a means of discouraging the more grievous sins.

v25 "And it repented Noah", the Genesis account has it upsetting the Lord and not Noah. The "repented" is taken from the KJV and would be better translated "regretted" or "grieved". It made Noah full of regret.

v26 "he hath called upon me, for they have sought his life", similar to the Psalmist's plea for protection from his enemies (cp Ps. 13). Such an indictment obviously implies the people are of a murderous disposition, cp. v. 18.

v27 Noah and his three sons, Shem, Japheth and Ham are all identified as "walk[ing] with God", and Noah is called "perfect". Some modern commentators take the "perfect in his generation" to be a statement meaning "compared to the people around him who were very wicked, Noah was righteous" and therefore a relativistic characterization. This relies heavily on the wording of the KJV, a better wording relaying the intent would be "You alone have I found righteous among this generation" (JPS on Gen. 7:1). Furthermore Noah is presented as very obedient in Gen. 6:22 and Ezekiel remarks upon Noah's righteousness in Ezek. 14:14, 20.

In the Scriptures, only Enoch, Enoch's Zion, and Noah and his sons are explicitly referred to as "walking with God".

v28-30 God sees corruption persist despite Noah's preaching and He must therefore follow through on the threat of the flood and cleanse the earth from wickedness.

Noah's deluge is used as a type of the eschatological "flood" that will purge the earth previous to the Millennium, which the Lord will once again covenant afterwards not to repeat, cf. Isa. 8:8, Isa. 28:2, Isa. 28:15-17, Isa. 54:9, Hosea 5:8, Amos 9:6, Zeph. 1:2-3, Zeph. 3:8.

v28 "violence", taken from the KJV, a better translation would be "lawlessness" or "chaos".

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