

From “Cling” to “Take” to “Family”:

Before and After the Deluge

Rachel Sharansky Danziger * October 26th 2021 * Bereshit: The Birthplace of Human Relationships #4

1: An ending?

Genesis 6:5-8

(5) The LORD saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time. (6) And the LORD regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened. (7) The LORD said, “I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created—men together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them.” (8) But Noah found favor with the LORD.

בראשית ו':ה'-ח'

(ה) וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ
וְכָל-יִצְרָר מִחֲשֹׁבֶת לְבָבוֹ רָק רָע כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
(ו) וַיִּנְחַם יְהוָה כִּי-עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ
וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֶל-לְבוֹ: (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲמַחֶה
אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי
הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה עַד-רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד-
עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתֶם: (ח)
וַיִּחַ מִצָּא חַן בְּעֵינַי יְהוָה: {פ}

2: ‘Taking’

Genesis 6:1-3

(1) When men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, (2) the divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them.— (3) The LORD said, “My breath shall not abide in man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years.”

בראשית ו':א'-ג'

(א) וַיְהִי כִּי-הִחַל הָאָדָם לָרֵב עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה
וּבָנוֹת יִלְדוּ לָהֶם: (ב) וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת-
בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים
מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֵא-יִדּוּן
רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעַלְמָם בְּשָׁנָה הַנּוֹא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו
מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה

Rashi on Genesis 6:2

הַנָּה THAT THEY WERE FAIR — Rabbi Judan said, “It is written here טבת הנה, for when they were being made to appear “good” by being decked out to be taken beneath the marriage canopy one of the lords would come and violate her first (Genesis Rabbah 26:5).

Bereshit Rabbah 26:5

כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה, אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹדֵן טֹבֹת כְּתִיב, מִשְׁהָיוּ מְטִיבִין אִשָּׁה לְבַעֲלָהּ הָיָה גְדוֹל נִכְנָס וּבוֹעֵלָהּ תִּחְלָה, הִדָּא הוּא דְכְּתִיב כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה, אֵלּוּ הַבְּתוּלוֹת, (בראשית ו, ב): וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ, אֵלּוּ נָשִׁי אֲנָשִׁים. מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ, זֶה זָכָר וּבְהֵמָה. רַבִּי הוֹנָא בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי אֲמַר דּוֹר הַמְּבוּל לֹא נִמּוּחוּ מִן הָעוֹלָם עַד שֶׁכָּתְבוּ גְמוּמָסוּת לְזָכָר וּלְבְּהֵמָה. אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַלְאִי בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁאֵתָהּ מוֹצֵא זָנוּת, אֲנִידְרֹלוּמוּסִיא בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם וְהוֹרְגַת טוֹבִים וְרָעִים. רַבִּי עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה בַּר רַבִּי סִימוֹן בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֹוִי אָמַר עַל הַכֹּל הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְאַרְיָה אִפּוּ חוּץ מִן הַזָּנוּת.

3. The Sodomite variation

Genesis 19:4-13

(4) They had not yet lain down, when the townspeople, the men of Sodom, young and old—all the people to the last man—gathered about the house. (5) And they shouted to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may be intimate with them.” (6) So Lot went out to them to the entrance, shut the door behind him, (7) and said, “I beg you, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. (8) Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please; but do not do anything to these men, since they have come under the shelter of my roof.” (9) But they said, “Stand back! The fellow,” they said, “came here as an alien, and already he acts the ruler! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door...(13) For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before the LORD has become so great that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.”

Genesis 19:31-32

(31) And the older one said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to consort with us in the way of all the world. (32) Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may maintain life through our father.”

בראשית י"ט:ד-י"ג

(ד) טָרָם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם נִסְבּוּ עַל-הַבַּיִת מִנְעֵר וְעַד-זָקֵן כָּל-הָעָם מִקְצֵה: (ה) וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל-לוֹט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַיֵּה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה וְצִיֵּאֵם אֵלֵינוּ וְנִדְעָה אֹתָם: (ו) וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵהֶם לוֹט הַפֶּתַח וְהִדְלִית סָגַר אַחֲרָיו: (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נְאֻמֵי תַרְעוּ: (ח) הֲנִה-נָא לִי שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדְעוּ אִישׁ אוֹצִיָּאה-נָא אֶתְהוֹן אֵלֵיכֶם וְעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לֹא-אֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֵי אֲלֹתֵעֲשׂוּ דְבָר כִּי-עַל-כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֵל קֶרְתִּי: (ט) וַיֹּאמְרוּ וְגִשׁ-הַלָּאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֶתֶד בָּא-לְגוֹר וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שְׁפוֹט עֲתָה נִרְעָ לָהֶם מֵהֶם וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ בְּלוֹט מְאֹד וַיִּגְשׂוּ לְשֹׁבֵר הַדְּלֵת... (יג) כִּי-מִשְׁחָתִים אֲנֻחֲנוּ אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי-גְדֹלָה צַעֲקוֹתָם אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַחנּוּ יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ:

בראשית י"ט:ל"א-ל"ב

(לא) וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל-הַצְעִירָה אָבִינוּ זָקֵן וְאִישׁ אֵין בְּאֶרֶץ לְבוֹא עֵלֵינוּ כְּדָרָךְ כָּל-הָאֶרֶץ: (לב) לָכֵה נִשְׁקָה אֶת-אָבִינוּ יַיִן וְנִשְׁכְּבָה עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע:

4: The expansion of Rapaciousness

Genesis 34:2-29

(2) Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, chief of the country, saw her, and took her and lay with her by force. (3) Being strongly drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and in love with the maiden, he spoke to the maiden tenderly. (4) So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as a wife."...

(21) "These people are our friends; let them settle in the land and move about in it, for the land is large enough for them; we will take their daughters to ourselves as wives and give our daughters to them. (22) But only on this condition will the men agree with us to dwell among us and be as one kindred: that all our males become circumcised as they are circumcised. (23) Their cattle and substance and all their beasts will be ours, if we only agree to their terms, so that they will settle among us."...

(25) On the third day, when they were in pain, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, brothers of Dinah, took each his sword, came upon the city unmolested, and slew all the males. (26) They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. (27) The other sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the town, because their sister had been defiled. (28) They seized their flocks and herds and asses, all that was inside the town and outside; (29) all their wealth, all their children, and their wives, all that was in the houses, they took as captives and booty.

Rashi on Genesis 34:7

AND THUS IT OUGHT NOT TO BE DONE — viz., to do violence to a maiden, for even the heathens have trained themselves (literally, have fenced themselves round) against unchastity as a consequence of the Flood which had come upon the world as a punishment for this sin (Genesis Rabbah 80:6).

בראשית ל"ד:ב'-כ"ט

(ב) וַיֵּרָא אֶתֶּהָ שָׁכֶם בֶּן־חַמּוֹר הַחִוִּי נָשִׂיא הָאֶרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֶתֶּהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנֶהָ: (ג) וַתִּדְבַק נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בַת־יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּאָהֵב אֶת־הַנְּעֹרָ וַיְדַבֵּר עִלְ-לֵב הַנְּעֹרָ: (ד) וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֶם אֶל־חַמּוֹר אָבִיו לֵאמֹר קַח־לִי אֶת־הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה...

(כא) הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ וַיָּשָׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ וַיִּסְחָרוּ אִתָּהּ וְהָאֶרֶץ הַגְּדוּלָה רַחֲבַת־יָדַיִם לְפָנֵיהֶם אֶת־בָּנֹתָם נִקַּח־לָנוּ לְנָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנֹתֵינוּ נָתַן לָהֶם: (כב) אַךְ־בְּזֹאת יֵאָתוּ לָנוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְשֹׁבֵת אִתָּנוּ לְהִיּוֹת לָעַם אֶחָד בְּהַמּוֹל לָנוּ כָּל־זָכָר כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם נִמְלִיִּם: (כג) מִקְנֵיהֶם וּקְנִיָּנָם וְכָל־בְּהֵמָתָם הֲלוֹא לָנוּ הֵם אֶךְ נִאֲוֹתָהּ לָהֶם וַיָּשָׁבוּ אִתָּנוּ...

(כד) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בַּהִיוֹתָם כְּאֲבִיִּים וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי־בָנָיִם יַעֲקֹב וְלוֹי אֶחָי דִּינָה אִישׁ חֲרָבוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל־הָעִיר בַּטַּח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל־זָכָר: (כו) וְאֶת־חַמּוֹר וְאֶת־שָׁכֶם בָּנוּ הָרְגוּ לְפִי־חָרָב וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׁכֶם וַיֵּצְאוּ: (כז) בָּנָי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ עַל־הַחֲלָלִים וַיָּבֹאוּ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ אַחֲוֹתָם: (כח) אֶת־צֹאֲנָם וְאֶת־בְּקָרָם וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיהֶם וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁר־בְּעִיר וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה לָקְחוּ: (כט) וְאֶת־כָּל־חִילָם וְאֶת־כָּל־טַפָּם וְאֶת־נְשֵׁיהֶם שָׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת:

5: Society's collapse

Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots*:

It is the very essence of Tragedy that the hero should become, step by step, separated from other people... The point about the heroes and heroines of Tragedy is that they end up utterly alone... completely cut off from the rest of society. They have been drawn by some part of themselves into a course of action which is fundamentally selfish, putting some egocentric desire above every other consideration, isolating them both from reality and from other people. (177-180)

What stories show us is how it is in the very nature of egotism that it can only see the world in a subjective, restricted fashion. Wherever it holds sway it casts around it a shadow which also tends to obscure the vision of everyone who is in that shadow. Equally we have seen how it is an inseparable part of 'coming to the light' that this should bring a clearer vision... 'Seeing whole' does not mean that they see and know everything. What it does mean is that they can see everyone and everything objectively, for what they really are. They have been liberated from the distortions of ego-consciousness, onto a different level which gives them a clearer understanding.(254)

6: Undoing creation

Genesis 7:17-23

(17) The Flood continued forty days on the earth, and the waters increased and raised the ark so that it rose above the earth. (18) The waters swelled and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark drifted upon the waters. (19) When the waters had swelled much more upon the earth, all the highest mountains everywhere under the sky were covered. (20) Fifteen cubits higher did the waters swell, as the mountains were covered. (21) And all flesh that stirred on earth perished—birds, cattle, beasts, and all the things that swarmed upon the earth, and all mankind. (22) All in whose nostrils was the merest breath of life, all that was on dry land, died. (23) All existence on earth was blotted out—man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

בראשית ז': י"ז-כ"ג

(יז) וַיְהִי הַמַּבּוּל אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם עַל-הָאָרֶץ
וַיִּרְבּוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת-הַתְּבֹה וַתָּרָם מֵעַל
הָאָרֶץ: (יח) וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד עַל-
הָאָרֶץ וַתִּלָּךְ הַתְּבֹה עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: (יט)
וְהַמַּיִם גָּבְרוּ מְאֹד מְאֹד עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּכְסּוּ כָל-
הַהָרִים הַגְּבוּהִים אֲשֶׁר-תַּחַת כָּל-הַשָּׁמַיִם: (כ)
חַמֵּשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה אַמָּה מִלְּמַעְלָה גָּבְרוּ הַמַּיִם
וַיִּכְסּוּ הַהָרִים: (כא) וַיִּגְוַע כָּל-בְּשָׂר וְהַרְמֵשׁ
עַל-הָאָרֶץ בְּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבַחַיָּה וּבְכָל-הַשָּׂרִץ
הַשָּׂרִץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְכָל הָאָדָם: (כב) כָּל אֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁמַת-רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאִפּוֹ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בַּחַרְבָּה
מִתּוֹ: (כג) וַיִּמַּח אֶת-כָּל-הַיְקוּם וְאֲשֶׁר עַל-
פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה עַד-רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד-
עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּמָּחוּ מִן-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁאַר אַחַד-נֹחַ
וְאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתְּבֹה:

7: 'Family'

Genesis 8:16-19

(16) “Come out of the ark, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives. (17) Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds, animals, and everything that creeps on earth; and let them swarm on the earth and be fertile and increase on earth.” (18) So Noah came out, together with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives. (19) Every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that stirs on earth came out of the ark **by families.**

בראשית ח': ט"ז-י"ט

(טז) צֵא מִן־הַתְּבֵּה אִתָּךְ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּבְנֵיךָ וּנְשֵׁי־
 בְנֵיךָ אִתָּךְ: (יז) כָּל־הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר־אִתְּךָ מִכָּל־
 בֶּשָׂר בְּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל־
 הָאָרֶץ (הוּצֵא) [הִצֵּא] אִתְּךָ וְשָׂרְצוֹ בְּאָרֶץ וּפְרוֹ
 וְרִבּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: (יח) וַיֵּצֵא־נֹחַ וּבְנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ
 וּנְשֵׁי־בְנָיו אִתּוֹ: (יט) כָּל־הַחַיָּה כָּל־הָרֶמֶשׂ
 וְכָל־הָעוֹף כֹּל רוֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיהֶם
 יָצְאוּ מִן־הַתְּבֵּה:

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Noach 11:1

Another interpretation (of Gen. 8:1): THEN GOD REMEMBERED NOAH, < ALL THE BEASTS, AND ALL THE CATTLE >. If he remembered Noah, why < also > the beasts and the cattle? May the name of the Holy One be blessed, who never deprives any creature of its reward. If even a mouse has preserved its family and not intermingled with another species, it deserves to receive a reward. But all the people from the generation of the flood did mingle their families, as stated (in Gen. 6:12): THEN GOD SAW THE WORLD; AND BEHOLD, IT WAS CORRUPT. Thus, just as he had exacted retribution from the humans who had sinned, so he exacted retribution from the cattle, the beasts, and the fowl.. In order to teach you that they also had mingled their families and were having intercourse with species that were not their own, each and every species with a species that was not its own. Then the Holy One called Noah and said to him: Choose for yourself cattle, beasts, and fowl [from those] who have not mingled their families, as stated (in Gen. 7:2): FROM EVERY CLEAN BEAST, < those > just as clean as when they were created. Then, when they went out from the ark, the Holy One testified concerning them that they had not mingled their families. Thus it is stated (in Gen. 8:19): THEY WENT OUT BY THEIR FAMILIES. The Holy One, therefore, remembered them along with Noah, as stated (in Gen. 8:1)

Sivan Rahav Meir, The Jewish Status (in Hebrew):

After humanity was wiped out in the deluge due to moral corruption, infidelity, and the ability to commit to any values – it is suddenly written: “by families.” A family. That is what was created after the great storm... Speaking in the context of living within a family unit, I once heard a wise man make the following statement: “Limiting my desires to make room for other people’s desires – that is the only way to be built up.”

8: A new human status

Genesis 1:24-25

(24) God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” And it was so. (25) God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good.

Genesis 1:27

(27) And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:28-30

(28) God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” (29) God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. (30) And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so.

Genesis 9:1-7

(1) God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. (2) The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. (3) Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. (4) You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. (5) But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man! (6) Whoever sheds the blood of man, By man shall his blood be shed; For in His image Did God make man. (7) Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it.”

בראשית א': כ"ד-כ"ה

(כד) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בַּהֶמָּה וּרְמֶשׂ וְחַיֵּית-אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן. (כה) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:

בראשית א': כ"ז

(כז) וַיְבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

בראשית א': כ"ח-ל'

(כח) וַיְבַרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּ וַיְרֹדוּ בַדְּגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיֵּי הָרֶמֶשׂוֹת עַל-הָאָרֶץ: (כט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב וְזֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ. (ל) וְלִכְלַח-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ וְלִכְלַח-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְלֹא וְרוֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

בראשית ט': א'-ז'

(א) וַיְבַרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: (ב) וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחַתָּכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמֹשׁ הָאֲדָמָה וּבְכָל-דְּגַי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: (ג) כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּיִּרְק עֵשֶׂב נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל: (ד) אֲדָם-בְּשׂוֹר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ: (ה) וְאִךְ אֶת-דַּמְכֶם לִנְפֹשְׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרְשׁ מִיַּד כָּל-חַיִּיהָ אֲדַרְשְׁנָהּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אָחִיו אֲדַרְשׁ אֶת-נֶפֶשׁ הָאָדָם: (ו) שִׁפְךָ דָּם הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ לְשִׁפְךָ כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם: (ז) וְאִתְּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ שִׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ-בָהּ: {ס}

9: 'Covenant'

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "The Trace of God" (Noach 5778):

Genesis 9 is... parallel to Genesis 1. But there are two significant differences. In both there is a keyword, repeated seven times, but it is a different word. In Genesis 1 the word is *tov*, "good." In Genesis 9, the word is *brit*, "covenant." That is the first difference. The second is that they both state that God made the human person in His image, but they do so in markedly different ways... Genesis 1 tells me that I am in the image of God. Genesis 9 tells me that *the other person* is in the image of God. Genesis 1 speaks about the dominance of *Homo sapiens* over the rest of creation. Genesis 9 speaks about the sanctity of life and the prohibition of murder. The first chapter tells us about the potential power of human beings, while the ninth chapter tells us about the moral limits of that power. We may not use it to deprive another person of life.

This also explains why the keyword, repeated seven times, changes from "good" to "covenant." When we call something *good*, we are speaking about how it is in itself. But when we speak of *covenant*, we are talking about relationships. A covenant is a moral bond between persons.

What differentiates the world after the Flood from the world before is that the terms of the human condition have changed. God no longer expects people to be good because it is in their nature to be so. To the contrary, God now knows that "every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood" (Gen. 8: 21) – and this despite the fact that we were created in God's image...thinking yourself godlike, if you are human, all-too-human, is very dangerous indeed.

That is why, with one simple move, God transformed the terms of the equation. After the Flood, He taught Noach and through him all humanity, that we should think, *not of ourselves but of the human other* as in the image of God. That is the only way to save ourselves from violence and self-destruction.

This really is a life-changing idea. It means that the greatest religious challenge is: Can I see God's image in one who is not in my image – whose colour, class, culture or creed is different from mine?... Can I see a trace of God in the face of a stranger?

"When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them."

— **Martin Buber**