

## The Rainbow Covenant and the Story of the Flood study sheet

1. YHVH (*Hashem*) saw, that the human's evil *ra'at ba'adam* in the land was tremendous, and every leaning of his heart's thought was only bad all day. And YHVH **drew-in** *vayinachem*, for He made the *adam* within the land, and He was pained unto His heart.

And YHVH said: I will blot out the human *adam* I created from off the face of the land, from human to beast to crawler to bird of the skies, for I am withdrawn-against *nichamti* my making them...

And the land was ruined before the *Elohim* and the land was filled up with violence. And *Elohim* saw the land and here, her ruin, for all flesh ruined his way on the land. And *Elohim* said to Noah: The end of all flesh comes before me, for the land is filled with violence from before them. Here am I going to ruin them with the land. Gen 6:3-13

2. *Elohim* (God) **remembered Noah and all the animals** *kol bachayab* and beasts which were with him in the ark... And it was in year six hundred and one, in the first on day one of the month, the waters were drying up from off the earth. And Noah took off the covering of the ark, and saw, and here, the face of the ground was drying up. And in the second month, on day twenty-seven of the month, the land was dried-out.

And *Elohim* spoke to Noah saying: Go out from the ark, you and your woman and your sons and your sons' women with you; every animal *chayah* which is with you, from all flesh of bird and beast and every crawler crawling on the land which is with you, going out with you, and they will **swarm** in the land... And Noah built an altar for YHVH and... sent up burnt-up-offerings with the altar. YHVH smelled the sweet smell and YHVH said unto His heart: I will not add to cursing anymore the ground for the sake of humanity – for the human heart's leaning is bad from his youth, and I will not add anymore to striking down all life as I did. Throughout all the land's days, sowing and reaping and cold and hot and summer and winter and day and night will not stop/rest *lo yishbotu*.

*Elohim* blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: Bear fruit and increase and fill the land.

And a fearing of you and **terror of you** will be over every animal of the land and every bird of the skies, everything which crawls the ground and all the fish of the sea, into your hands they are given. **All that crawls which lives, for you it will be for eating, like green plants** I have given to you-all. But just the flesh with **his soul *nafsbo*, his blood**, you will not eat. And just your blood for your souls will I require, **by the hand of every animal** and by the hand of every human... for in **the image of *Elohim*** He made the human. And you, bear fruit and increase, **swarm through the land** and increase in her. Gen 8:1, 15-9:7

3. *Elohim* said unto Noah and unto his sons saying: And I, here **I am erecting my covenant with you** and with your seed after you **and with every animal / every soul living with you** / *kol nefesh bachayab itchem*, among the bird and among the beast and among every animal of the field with you... and all flesh will not be cut-off anymore from the flood waters, and there will be no more flood to destroy the land.

And *Elohim* said: This is this covenant-sign which I place **between me and between you and between every living / animal soul / *kol nefesh chayah* which is with you, for generations, for all-time: my bow I have set in the cloud, and it will be a covenant sign between Me and the land**. And it will be, when I am clouding over the Earth, and the bow will appear in the cloud, that I will remember My covenant that is between Me and between you and between every soul living in all flesh. And there will never again be the waters for a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow will be in the cloud, and I will see her, remembering the covenant for all-time between *Elohim* and between all flesh on the land. Gen 9:8-17

For more about these texts, the translation, or the study guide this sheet is part of, see: [jewcology.com/resource/Genesis-Covenant-Jubilee-Shmitah-and-the-Land-Ethic](http://jewcology.com/resource/Genesis-Covenant-Jubilee-Shmitah-and-the-Land-Ethic)

**Key:** underline = relation to the land; **san serif** = relation to animals or food; **bolded words** have comments on them.

'Land' may also be translated as 'Earth'; 'ground' may also be translated as 'soil'. Translation and commentary by Rabbi David Seidenberg; contact: [rebduvid86@gmail.com](mailto:rebduvid86@gmail.com) **neohasid.org** ©2011

As a consequence of eating from the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad, three relationships have deteriorated: the relationship between God and humans, between woman and man, and between humans and the land. The flood story continues the history of these relationships. At the end of the story, the relationship between humanity, God and the land is replaced by a covenant. The animals are equal partners in this covenant.

**The human's evil in the land... from off the face of the land...the land was ruined.** The sin is against the land; the flood will cleanse the land.

**And *Elohim* saw.** Like Sodom (Sodom), and like in Egypt, when God saw the Israelites' enslavement, 'seeing' means understanding with empathy and compassion.

**YHVH drew-in.** When Noah is named, his father says: 'This one will comfort us *yinchameinu* from... the pain of our hands from the ground which YHVH cursed.' Instead, YHVH who is '*yinachem*'.

***Elohim* remembered Noah and all the animals.** God's mercy and covenantal love extend to the animals and not just the humans. Why were the animals rewarded? Because they kept a *mitzvah*—to preserve their species. (Tanchuma)

**Swarm.** A kind of super-fertility, where the animals would reproduce as quickly as bugs. There are only two places where it is used to describe human beings, here below and in the description of how fertile the Israelites were in Egypt.

**Cursing the ground for the sake of humanity.** God forswears destroying the land for humanity's sake—severing the connection between people and the land that has driven the *Bereishit* story thus far.

**Sowing and reaping...will not stop.** Not stopping is the mark of a world that has abandoned Eden, where creation is completed through resting or stopping.

**Terror of you.** This sounds like dominion, but according to tradition, it is not. Rashi (on *Bereishit Rabbah*) says that after the flood *r'diyah*, dominion, did not return. Acc. to Rashi's interpretation of dominion (that the humans would call and the animals would come), terror is the exact opposite.

**All that crawls which lives, for you it will be for eating, like green plants.** This is the end of the last vestige of Eden: not only will humans and the other animals not share the same food, but the other animals will become food.

**His soul, his blood.** The blood animates the entire body, so it is also called the soul. In *kasbrut*, the blood must be completely removed. When a wild animal is killed, the blood must be covered with earth, in a kind of burial for the animal's soul.

**By the hand of every animal.** Rashi, Ramban and the Talmud all say this means, 'I will let the animals kill anyone who kills another human'.

**I am erecting my covenant...with every soul living with you.** All the animals are equal partners in the rainbow covenant alongside human beings.

**Between Me and the land.** The land is a primary partner in the first covenant.