Noach dvar November 2, 2019

Entropy means going from a more well-defined set of states to one where there is more chaos. Another way to view it is going from, say, two states that are separate and different to one where they are combined.

Another way is to view it as going from instability to stability.

If you put hydrogen molecules together, with great pressure, they blow up and produce helium and stuff, which is more stable

If you put oxygen and heat together, with carbon, it burns and produces carbon dioxide. The separate elements are forced to combine and expend energy to produce a more stable single entity.

If you have an unstable situation, two things in too great proximity, they will interact and force a change, resulting in a more stable situation.

I have borrowed notions of these changes from African studies, African oral literature, to interpret our Tanakh, for some time. For instance, in African religious oral literature, in religious tales, if god is too close to the humans, living in too great proximity, an explosion, a killing, something like Aaron’s sons’ deaths, will occur, and the people will learn to live at a greater distance from the god with his or her dangerous powers. We have that over and over, don’t climb the mountain or touch it, it is smoking, you will die; don’t touch the ark of the covenant when you are moving it, its powers are too volatile, you will die, keep your distance.

Esau and Jacob, don’t live next to each other, you are too volatile. For stability’s sake you must separate and go your separate ways.

Sell ofF joseph, your brothers can’t live next to you. Then some radical change will occur, the natural order of the elements will be reasserted, joseph will move jacob’s hands to bless the right one first, over the other brother. Isaac and Ishmael cannot live together, and even if Ishmael is the elder, the natural order will place Isaac first in the order of receiving his father’s blessing.

Humans can’t live in proximity with god. When they need god, they will have to reach out, exceptionally, to create a change, and then the proper order will be reestablished. That’s the African notion of religious forces. The same in Noach. When people all spoke the same language, it was unstable. They worked to create a tower that brought them in too close proximity to god, and it had to be blown up; greater linguistic chaos was created; entropy did its work and the generalized chaos replaced the previous order of people all speaking one language.

In entropy theory, you can’t reverse the process; you can’t go from chaos back to order without expending more energy. In this myth, you can’t go from people all speaking different languages to one where everyone spoke the same one. You can’t put the family back together to what it had been before, when it was unstable. You can’t put noah’s three sons back into a situation where they were all equal; you can’t put esau back as the elder over Jacob so as to give him the father’s blessing. Ishmael has to be expelled, and after the expulsion will not return to play again with his brother, will not make fun of him; and the infertile first wife with her child, be it sarah, with her rival hagar, or Rebecca or Hannah, all those women whose children had come in second will find the proper order reasserted at the end. Similarly, clans in Africa, where the wrong person has ascended to leadership, will find mechanisms in place to change the order.

Put it different, let’s hope trump gets impeached.

But then we’ll have pence; oy vey.

So noah, the amazing story of his son viewing him naked, needed to place the one son in his place of servitude. Didn’t joseph dream his brothers would serve him, too? And wasn’t his rise from the lower status of prisoner, of slave, to highest person in the land, ineluctable? The order than had placed him lower was unstable. Entropy drove joseph to move from slave of Potifer to ruler over the Egyptian people, albeit under pharaoh.

And even there, over time, the order that had placed pharaoh over the Israelites was unstable, was not to endure.

The story of Noah begins with that instability, which could not be sustained.

7:11Now the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth became full of robbery.

12And God saw the earth, and behold it had become corrupted, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

13And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth has become full of robbery because of them, and behold I am destroying them from the earth.

The same pattern as in the garden of eden story follows. The same pattern with the two brothers cain and abel. The same pattern with the Israelites in the desert. The same instability, caused by this or that, call it robbery or sinfulness or evil; the same solution, the expulsion, the punishment, the killing of all those who had revolted against Moses or God; the same Fall. From Tanakh to Milton, we must pass through the fire, the conflagration, before the energy of entropy is used up to stabilize things in the end.

7:19And the waters became exceedingly powerful upon the earth, and all the lofty mountains that were under the heavens were covered up.

[20Fifteen cubits above did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered up.

21And all flesh perished that moved upon the earth, among the fowl, and among the cattle, and among the beasts, and among all creeping creatures that creep upon the earth and all mankind.

22Everything that had the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils, of all that were on the dry land, died.]

*23And it [the Flood] blotted out all beings that were upon the face of the earth, from man to animal to creeping thing and to the fowl of the heavens, and they were blotted out from the earth, and only Noah and those with him in the ark survived.*

What will come next, the restoration of the proper order:

*8:1And God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God caused a spirit to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.*

And then the order of nature, of the world, of the divine creation separate from god, is restored:

[15And God spoke to Noah saying:

16"Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

17Every living thing that is with you of all flesh, of fowl, and of animals and of all the creeping things that creep on the earth, bring out with you, and they shall swarm upon the earth, and they shall be fruitful and multiply upon the earth."]

…

*21And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma, and the Lord said to Himself, "I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done.*

*22So long as the earth exists, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."*

**[9:**14And it shall come to pass, when I cause clouds to come upon the earth, that the rainbow will appear in the cloud.

15And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and between you and between every living creature among all flesh, and the water will no longer become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16And the rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will see it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and between every living creature among all flesh, which is on the earth."]

And finally, between the brothers, too, the order, see as divinely imposed, finally asserting itself:

26And he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be a slave to them.

27May God expand Japheth, and may He dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be a slave to them."

We all see the natural order in our own way. When I was young, women made dinner and served the family. Gays were in the closet, and goys were to be kept at a distance, especially from jewish young girls. Now we have lived in a world of entropy, and have learned to accept, and even love, the mixing we had been taught was wrong.

I expect entropy to continue its ways, and I realize this dvar, this interpretation, that I have been using for years is yet another order whose inherent instability will mean it too will undergo a shakeup before a better reading will emerge. I hope that your criticisms will help make that possible.