

# THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

## PARSHAT NOACH

Dr. Rivka Press Schwartz | October 23, 2020

### 1. Bereshit/Genesis 6:9-13:

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדַרְתָּיו אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ:

This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God.—

וַיֹּלֵד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים אֶת־שֵׁם אֶת־חָם וְאֶת־יָפֶת:

Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס:

The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness.

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי־שָׁחַתָה כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֶת־דַּרְכּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: (ס)

When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לִנְפֹשׁוֹת כָּל־בָּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי כִּי־מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ חָמָס מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּנִי מַשְׁחִיתֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth.

### 2. Oona Eisenstadt, “The Problem of the Promise: Derrida on Levinas on the City of Refuge,” *CrossCurrents*, Winter 2003 pp. 474-482

Why, Levinas asks, so much concern for the manslayerer? He answers: because we are all manslayerers. The manslayerer is the one who is half-guilty, since he has killed, and half-innocent, since he did not mean to kill. We all participate in structures of oppression--this makes us guilty--but we participate for the most part unwittingly--this makes us innocent. Levinas uses the images of sleepingness and wakefulness to describe our circumstances. Were we fully awake, he says, there would be no manslaughter. We would know what we were doing, and while under such conditions there might still be murder, there could be no unwitting harm. But, as it is, we do not know exactly what we're doing; our intentions frequently go awry; we are, in these

respects, sleepy. We're conscious enough to know that our state is imperfect; we push towards waking; we are aware that responsibility is not limited by negligence, that it is not really adequate to say "I made a mistake." For this reason, says Levinas, all our liberal cities are organized as cities of refuge. The original cities of refuge provided sanctuary because the manslayer was innocent, and exile because he was guilty. Our cities too provide sanctuary from radical violence, sanctuary we deserve in our innocence. At the same time they perpetuate unwitting oppression--economic, social, and political--and in this way allow or encourage their citizens to stand in exile from the truth, in sleep's exile from waking.

### **3. Chris Hayes, *A Colony In a Nation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017) p.32**

This book makes a simple argument: that American criminal justice isn't one system with massive racial disparities but two distinct regimes. One (the Nation) is the kind of policing regime you expect in a democracy; the other (the Colony) is the kind you expect in an occupied land. Policing is a uniquely important and uniquely dangerous function of the state. Dictatorships and totalitarian regimes use the police in horrifying ways; we call them "police states" for a reason. But the terrifying truth is that we as a people have created the Colony through democratic means. We have voted to subdue our fellow citizens; we have rushed to the polls to elect people promising to bar others from enjoying the fruits of liberty

### **4. Woody Guthrie, "Pretty Boy Floyd"**

Yes, as through this world I've wandered  
I've seen lots of funny men;  
Some will rob you with a six-gun,  
And some with a fountain pen.

And as through your life you travel,  
Yes, as through your life you roam,  
You won't never see an outlaw  
Drive a family from their home.