

## God of Losers

El – mighty, strong or prominent One

*Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you [alone] are righteous before Me in this generation. – Genesis 7:1 HCSB*

Genesis 6:9 tells us that "Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God's will and enjoyed a close relationship with him." I used to think of what an honor it would have been for Noah to have been judged by God Almighty to be the most righteous man of his time. Now, however, with more time and maturity, I look at Noah with a growing sense of pity and horror.

Over the course of Noah's story we are able to determine that he certainly was not sinless. Noah was not a hero like Moses.<sup>1</sup>

He did not attempt to negotiate on behalf of humanity like Abraham did for Sodom and Gomorrah<sup>2</sup> or Moses did for the people of Israel.<sup>3</sup> We can be sure that over the course of the 120-year project, people asked Noah what he was doing, and yet after over a century of work, not one person outside his immediate family believed or followed him.

After the flood, one of Noah's first priorities was to plant a vineyard, produce wine and get drunk! To give him some credit, however, it would put the greatest saint to the test to personally witness the death of a world. But when one of his sons, Ham, sees him naked and drunk in his tent and mocks Noah before the other two brothers, Noah does not curse Ham but Ham's son, Canaan, and his descendants!

What's the point? To denigrate Noah? Not at all. The point is that one of God's names is "El" which means mighty, strong or prominent. El can rescue, El can salvage, El can work through even the most fundamentally flawed human. Here is a man who seems to have been a terrible witness, struggled with alcoholism and was a poor father; yet El was able to use him to salvage humanity. How? How did Noah qualify to be the savior of the known world in spite of his weaknesses? He was deeply, profoundly obedient to the will of God that he knew. His knowledge of God or of theology was not vast. His religious life was probably as superstitious and error-prone as ours. Yet because he jumped when God said jump, God pronounced him righteous.

El is not mighty or prominent because of the number of followers He has. He is not made strong by the buildings we build or the sacrifices we make for Him. El is intrinsically, essentially and by His own nature the Mighty One. If any power is transferred, if any glory, it is from El to us. And that transfer can only take place within the medium of obedience.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 2:16-17

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 18:16-33

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 32:11-14