

## READ

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Genesis 9

## REFLECT

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As soon as Noah and his family exited the ark, God gave them a command – begin repopulating the earth. Not only was procreation on their agenda, but they were given the mandate to have power over every living thing. It should be noted that this kind of power wasn't meant for abuse, but care. And finally, whereas God hadn't previously allowed humanity to eat meat, they were now given the go ahead to become carnivores so long as they didn't eat the meat with its blood still in it. All this was good, but the very best thing to come was the covenant God made with Noah *and* every future generation of humanity and if that wasn't enough, with every creature on the earth. This covenant was a promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood, and the symbol for that covenant was the rainbow, or as God said, "I have placed my bow in the clouds." That language is special – bows were weapons (think bow and arrow), and in this promise God chose to disarm Godself and never again threaten harm to the earth.

From the rainbow covenant we turn directly to life returning to the earth and a new curse. Noah and his family began to settle down and establish roots for themselves, first with a vineyard. After his first batch of wine was finished, Noah overindulged and passed out in his tent naked. One of his sons, Ham, walked in on his naked dad and went to tell his brothers. It's not clear if it was gossip or if he wanted help in caring for Noah, but we do know that when Noah found out, he was angry and cursed Ham (Canaan) to be the servant of his brothers. What modern readers miss is an ancient cultural norm that found nudity to be very problematic – remember that at first Adam and Eve were naked but not embarrassed, until they ate the fruit, then they were. Aside from the issues with nudity, the curse of Ham was really a way to understand a long history of conflict between the people of Israel and the people of Canaan and other related peoples (Egypt, Philistine, etc.). Later in history the curse of Ham would be used to support a false narrative of the "biblical basis" for the enslavement of people from Africa – a case of twisting scripture for evil ends.

## REACT

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- How do you understand the sign of the rainbow and God's covenant with all creatures on the earth? Did you realize it was with every creature and not just humanity? Should the breadth of the covenant change how we relate to animals? How does humanity's mandate to have power over every creature fit in?
- If the rainbow is a sign that God has willingly become "disarmed" – removing the option of floods as means of punishment – what does that mean for us? How might we disarm ourselves when we get in conflict with others? What weapons might we need to remove from our personal/emotional inventory?
- Have you ever heard of the curse of Ham or how some have misinterpreted it? How have you generally dealt with parts of the Bible being used as a weapon (or put another way, the Bible being misused to hurt instead of heal)?

## RESPOND

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Centering prayer: *Find a quiet place for you to sit without any distractions. Silently re-read Genesis 9:12-17, the covenant God established with the whole world. Reflect on what the promise means for you. Choose a word that strikes you from the passage. Focus on it, let it rest in you, notice what your body does while you focus your attention on your word. As you continue, allow yourself to simply rest in God's presence. Try to allow as much time for stillness and quiet as you can afford – maybe try for 20 minutes.*

*If your mind tends to wander, you might want something simple – like a [printed finger labyrinth](#) – to keep your attention from straying too far so you can allow yourself to really relax and connect with the Holy Spirit.*